> mass decision-making does not mean that the workers make managerial decisions for a plant or mine or commune production team, but rather that they discuss basic management alternatives, under Party guidance…The CCP expected that 'when the workers felt that their demands and suggestions' on production practices 'were duly considered, supported and assisted by the leaders, their feeling of being the master was strengthened.'

This substitution of mass mobilization for mass decisionmaking has been a feature of state socialist projects since the first days of the Soviet Union, but it was perfected under Mao. By strengthening peasants' "feeling" of being masters, the CCP guaranteed a degree of consent during the GLF that had been impossible for Stalin in the 1930s.

This mix of consent and coercion allowed the CCP to mobilize low-tech labor power at an incredible level. Peasant work teams not only raised agricultural production, but also smelted steel, and built dams, irrigation systems and factories, often using crude technical implements. Once communal kitchens had replaced the peasant household, women were moved out of their homes to commune work teams. Officials lauded this as a step forward for women's liberation, but the shift ultimately conformed to the pattern of Third World developmental leaps, wherein women serve as a temporary reserve army of labor. At the height of the GLF, millions of women were mobilized, working an average of 250 days in 1959 as compared with 166 in 1957. In some work brigades, up to 80 percent of the peasant population was assigned to nonagricultural work, with theremaining labor in the fields left to women peasants. Afterward, the vast majority of women would be returned to work in the domestic sphere. The army was also temporarily mobilized: in 1956 the army had logged 4 million workdays, but in 1957 the

Bloom and Contend

A Critique of Maoism

Chino

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ual subsistence farming. Sometimes houses were destroyed to make way for communal infrastructure: in Ningxiang County in Hunan, 700,000 dwellings were reduced to 450,000. Large communal kitchens were established to replace the household as the main site of peasant reproduction. Masses of peasants ate collectively in the kitchens, before being dispatched in large work teams to tend fields, or work on irrigation projects, steel production, or other industrial and infrastructural projects.

Party control over reproduction could be used punitively. The state had already imposed a monopoly on foods in 1953, requisitioning grain to sell back to different sectors of the population according to its development priorities. In 1955, the state established the hukou system, under which Chinese citizens were given work assignments in particular territories, with access to food and public benefits restricted to their designated areas. Now party cadres assumed direct control over the daily reproduction of 110 million peasant households. In some cases, peasants who criticized the GLF or failed to meet production goals were denied access to food. As one cadre from Gucheng commune in Anhui province put it, "holding the communal kitchen's ladle and scale in my hand, I decide who lives and who dies."

The communes were not primarily coercive institutions, however. Drawing on the Yan'an heritage, the CCP employed mass forums and mobilizations as its primary method of statecraft, rather than outright force. Cadres and peasant leaders sat together on management bodies that were partially subject to elections, and held mass discussions of how best to implement production goals set by the party leadership. At the same time, the GLF was powerfully directed from above. Workers and peasants rarely took decisions themselves, but rather considered and adjusted initiatives coming from the party hierarchy. As a Western scholar noted at the time,

cial classes, thus accumulating corpses alongside fixed capital. State capital, no less than capital in its other forms, comes into the world "dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt" as Marx described.

Mao faced similar material constraints in China and pursued similar goals, but but hoped to accomplish them without the Soviet shortcomings. The essential difference between Mao's approach and Stalin's was that the CCP was firmly embedded in the peasant classes. With the work methods and mass organizations established in the countryside in the Yan'an period, the CCP had a far closer connection to the peasantry than the CPSU. Thus the CCP could transform agriculture and initiate development projects through mass mobilization led by rural cadres, rather than at gunpoint.

On the heels of the Anti-Rightist movement, Mao's wing of the party pushed for a "rash advance" to develop the country. Rural cadres were instructed to establish "people's communes" across the countryside in 1958, administrative units that were much larger than the cooperatives established in 1955-56. While cooperatives had contained an average of 164 families, the communes held 5,000 households each on average, and sometimes as many as 20,000. They covered large geographical territories, and centralized many of the governmental functions of the area in a single unit, including education, healthcare, and overseeing agricultural and industrial production. The results were dramatic: by the end of 1958, 99% of the peasant population had been concentrated into 26,578 communes across the country.

The communes gave party cadres a high degree of control over the reproduction of the rural population. Communes commandeered the property of individual peasant households: usually seed stores, farm tools and animals—and in some cases cooking implements and even furniture—were moved to a central location as communal property. In some cases individual plots of land were expropriated as well, thus abolishing individ-

Contents

INTRODUCTION 7

I.PROLOGUE:THE FIRST CHINESE REVOLUTION 13

1. The Emergence of Modern China 14

2. The Comintern: State Capitalist Foreign Policy 18

3. The Disaster of 1927 21

4. The Turn to the Countryside 26

II.PEOPLE'S WAR FROM THE COUNTRYSIDE 29

5. The Chinese Soviet Republic and the Long March: 1931-1935 30

6. The Yan'an heritage: 1935-1945 33

7. The United Front 38

8. The New Democratic Revolution 41

9. Mao and the Dialectic 46

10. Liberation: 1946-1949 55

III.THE CCP IN STATE POWER **58**

11. Development and Bureaucratization: 1950-1956 **60**

12. The Crisis of De-Stalinization **63**

13. The Hundred Flowers Campaign: 1956-1957 **66**

14. The Great Leap Forward: 1958-1962 **72**

15. The Great Famine **79**

16. The Sino-Soviet Split and the Critique of Stalinism: 1960-1963 **83**

17. An Explosion Waiting to Happen **88**

IV.THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION **90**

18. Revolution Inaugurated: 1965-1966 **93**

19. Red Guards in Beijing: 1966-1967 **97**

20. Dual Power in Shanghai: January 1967 **101**

21. The First Thermidor: February 1967 **105**

22. The "Wuhan incident" and Armed Struggle: 1967 **110**

23. "Whither China?" and the Ultra-Left: 1968 **114**

24. The Shanghai Textbook and Socialist Transition: 1975 **120**

25. Twilight of Possibility **128**

Soviet collectivization. Second, the authoritarian requirements and human costs of the model itself.

In the 1930s, the Soviet Union addressed its underdevelopment problems through "socialist primitive accumulation," a term coined by party economist Yevgeni Preobrazhinsky (who was eventually tried and executed by Stalin in 1937). Under Preobrazhinsky's scheme, peasants in the countryside were forced into collective farms, in hopes of raising agricultural output through more efficient social organization in the absence of farming technology. Any rise in grain was then used to feed the growing industrial cities, and was also exported to other countries, to generate state profits and further finance industrialization. When the CPSU put this policy into action, it prompted extensive resistance from the peasantry. Stalin responded by labeling resistors khulaks(rich peasants) and imprisoning and executing them en masse. Heavy procurement of foodstuffs from the peasantry eventually contributed to outbreaks of famine across the Soviet breadbasket. Soviet collectivization and industrialization was thus accomplished at great human cost. By 1940, over 90% of peasant lands in the USSR had been collectivized, and the state had expanded its industrial base even though agricultural productivity continued to lag. Around 10-12 million peasants were dead, and tens of thousands imprisoned.

The Soviet experience indicates the structural forces constraining state capitalist development. Had a revolution taken place in Europe in the 1920s in tandem with the Russian Revolution, workers in the advanced capitalist zones might have freely shared agricultural and industrial technology, or food surpluses, with a developing Russian federation of communes. As it was, states like the USSR were left to pursue "socialism in one country" starting from a low level of development, and with limited ability to participate in global markets. In this context, industrial development could only take place through hyper-exploitation of the country's non-capitalist so-

14. The Great Leap Forward: 1958-1962

Along with the political consequences of Soviet-style development, China in the late 1950s still faced challenges of economic development. In essence, the CCP confronted the same conditions as Russia after 1917: how could the new state abolish feudal relations, develop industry, and raise industrial and agricultural productivity—the historical tasks of capitalist development—while moving toward "socialism in one country"? The first Five Year Plan had successfully expanded Chinese industry. But industry itself was now increasingly limited by the low productivity of agriculture, which demanded too much labor for too little output, as well as a lack of infrastructure such as transportation, irrigation and electricity. Mao sought to address this situation through a rural mass campaign that would draw millions of people into the workforce, and rapidly raise agricultural output. He believed this effort would produce labor surpluses (which could then be redirected toward industrial and infrastructure projects) and food surpluses (which could feed industrial workers, or be sold for export to raise funds for industrial development). He called this effort the Great Leap Forward (GLF).

The GLF remains a controversial topic. Scholars and revolutionaries disagree over its costs and accomplishments, and many of their arguments rest on what little information has been secreted out of sealed state archives that documented the campaign. I deal with the GLF here at length, in order to highlight two points. First, the parallels between the GLF and

CONCLUSION 132

26. Where Did Maoism Come From? 134

27. What Is Useful in Mao's Politics Today? 139

institute a limited version of the reforms for which the movement advocated. This was Mao's practical answer to the questions posed in 1956. He sought to ameliorate the worst aspects of the Soviet model, while retaining his commitment to state capitalism, party rule as a stand-in for proletarian power, and "socialism in one country." It amounted to a Stalinist critique of Stalinism.

Now Mao was pressed on several fronts. The Hundred Flowers campaign had revealed the depth of dissatisfaction in Chinese society, and state officials felt growing pressure to improve living standards, in order to demonstrate the legitimacy of state socialism. Only four years out from the Korean War, other party leaders advocated for an expansion of heavy industry, in order to strengthen the Chinese military and deter Western aggression. Still other party leaders insisted that the development of industry and infrastructure required raising agricultural productivity, because too much labor was locked up in labor-intensive agriculture, and too little food was produced to feed urban workers and for export. Finally, the Anti-Rightist crackdown had alienated the party from some of its social base, requiring a new political project to unify Chinese society. Mao found a solution to all these problems by returning to the peasantry, and launching a mass mobilization to develop the economy: the Great Leap Forward.

4. They should help to consolidate, and not undermine or weaken, democratic centralism.

5. They should help to strengthen, and not shake off or weaken, the leadership of the Communist Party.

With the final publication of Mao's speech, the official limits to dissent were clear: mass criticism and even public disturbances were acceptable, so long as they didn't threaten state power or party control over the movement. With this shift, the CCP abruptly transformed the Hundred Flowers movement into an "Anti-Rightist Campaign," and began persecuting its critics. The ensuing Anti-Rightist movement targeted around 550,000 people with public criticisms, imprisonment, and in some cases execution. The crackdown mainly focused on intellectuals, but cadres in the CCP who had too enthusiastically supported the rectification movement were also targeted. Lin Hsi-Ling was purged from the party youth organization, and the period of open critical forums was brought to a close. Only after the crackdown did Mao's wing of the party institute some reforms. In many industries, one-man management was replaced with "administrative committees" made up of managers, technicians and workers. In late 1958, a set of reforms implemented a system of "two participations" (cadres participating in manual labor and workers in management) "one reform" (changes to stringent factory rules) and the "triple union" (unity of workers, cadres and technicians).

Mao's conduct in 1957 established a pattern he would repeat on a far larger scale during the Cultural Revolution. Seeking to ameliorate the bureaucracy and authoritarianism engendered by state capitalism, Mao called forth a movement to rectify the party. However, the movement soon began to overflow the bounds he had decided for it at the outset, and develop its own definitions of the problems in Chinese society. Once the ferment threatened to undermine the effectiveness of party control, Mao reversed himself, and used state power to quash the very popular energies he claimed to support. Only then did he

INTRODUCTION

> Who are our enemies? Who are our friends? This is a question of the first importance for the revolution.
>
> –Mao Tse-tung, Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society, 1926

The Chinese revolutionary experience comprised one of the great world-historical revolutions of the 20th century. It spanned the overthrow of the dynastic system that had governed China for over 2,000 years; years of rapid modernization that saw the growth anarchist and communist politics in East Asia; two decades of mobile rural warfare, leading to the triumph of a state socialist project; and finally, to a series of internal upheavals and external conflicts that brought the country to the brink of civil war, and culminated in the emergence of the capitalist dreadnought which now stands to shape the course of the 21st century. One fruit of this rich historical experience is Maoism.

The term "Maoism" is used differently by different political tendencies, to describe syntheses of the theories and strategies that Mao Zedong, and his allies in the Chinese Communist Party, developed from the 1920s to the 1970s. In its various iterations, Maoism has made a considerable impact on the U.S. revolutionary left. In the 1960s, a wide range of groups in the black liberation, Chicano, and Puerto Rican movements, and later the New Communist movement, looked to Mao for inspiration and theory. This influence continues today, not only through well-established groups like the Revolutionary Communist Party and the two Freedom Road Socialist Organizations, but also through smaller and younger groupings such as the Kasama network and the New Afrikan Black Panther Party—Prison Chapter. If any wave of social movement is to appear in the U.S. in the coming years, Maoist politics are likely to be a significant element of its revolutionary wing.

workers also decried the loss of control over the production process that they had briefly enjoyed immediately after the tumult of 1949. Shanghai workers held sit-ins and hunger strikes, marched on cadre offices, attacked managers, and organized "united command headquarters" to coordinate their struggles, as they would a decade later during the Cultural Revolution. Eventually the ACFTU sided with the workers, after Liu Shaoqi, then head of the federation, argued that cadres should support the strikes in order to retain legitimacy. Peasants too participated in the upsurge: in many agricultural cooperatives, cadre leaders were critiqued for authoritarian behavior, and for failing to consult with peasants before finalizing production plans with their party superiors.

Party leaders were startled by the ferocity of the public criticism, and many advocated for a crackdown. In June 1957, an edited version of Mao's "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People" speech was finally released to the public. Driven by his fear of a Hungarian-style uprising against the CCP, Mao revised his document to include more limitations on public criticism. If non-antagonistic contradictions "are not handled properly, or if we relax our vigilance and lower our guard," Mao argued, "antagonism may arise," especially under the influence of counter-revolutionary elements. In Mao's view, this was what occurred in Hungary: "deceived by domestic and foreign counter-revolutionaries, a section of the people in Hungary made the mistake of resorting to violence against the people's government." To avoid this outcome, Mao added a set of criteria to his speech that placed limits on mass criticism:

1. Words and deeds should help to unite, and not divide, the people of all our nationalities.

2. They should be beneficial, and not harmful, to socialist transformation and socialist construction.

3. They should help to consolidate, and not undermine or weaken, the people's democratic dictatorship.

following. A 1957 People's Dailyarticle criticized one of Lin's appearances at Beijing University:

> She arranged certain phenomena in the life of our society—such as the division of officials into grades for hearing reports and seeing documents and the distribution of furniture by their offices—and called them a class system, saying that it (i.e, class system) had already entered all aspects of life. …Moreover, quoting Engels' theory that one country cannot construct socialism and Lenin's dictum that socialism is the elimination of class, she arrived at the conclusion that present-day China and Russia are not socialist. She loudly demanded a search for 'true socialism' and advocating using explosive measures to reform the present social system.

While intellectuals criticized the state, workers in some areas began fighting for material gains. In Shanghai, 30,000 workers participated in labor actions at 587 enterprises, and more than 700 other enterprises experienced smaller incidents. One party publication estimated that 10,000 strikes erupted nationally over the whole Hundred Flowers period. An August 1957 article in thePeople's Daily acknowledged that the ACFTU unions had come to be considered "tongues of the bureaucracy, and the tails of the administration and the 'workers control department'" by many workers. Thus strikes and protests spilled outside ACFTU control, and forced trade union cadres to scramble to catch up. Worker slogans boasted, "If you don't learn from Hungary, you won't get anything" and "Let's create another Hungarian Incident."

In Shanghai, most strikes occurred in recently nationalized enterprises, where workers opposed wage "rationalizations" that had taken away their traditional bonuses and food subsidies, while preserving those of state bureaucrats. State-sector

If this is the case, then today's revolutionaries must ask: what is our understanding of Maoist politics, and of the Chinese revolution that produced them? What are the major pillars of "Maoism" in its various forms, and in what historical contexts did these elements emerge? How might these politics be enacted in the present moment, and how do they help or hinder us in developing a revolutionary movement for today? This piece offers a set of preliminary answers to these questions. It is the result of several months of study and discussion, both individually and in groups with Maoist, left communist and anarchist comrades. In the pages below, I provide a brief survey of the 50-year Chinese revolutionary experience for militants who may be unfamiliar with it, and contextualize the main elements of Maoist politics within that history. Along the way, I develop a coherent analysis of the Chinese revolution, and of Maoist politics, from an anarchist communist perspective.

While I disagree with him on particulars, my take on the Chinese revolution is in broad agreement with the central claims of Loren Goldner's controversial "Notes Toward a Critique of Maoism," published online in October 2012. The Chinese revolution was a remarkable popular peasant war and led by Marxist-Leninists. Taking the helm of an underdeveloped country in the absence of a global revolution, the Chinese Communist Party dealt with its conditions by acting as a surrogate bourgeoisie, and developing the country along state capitalist lines. The exploitation and accumulation around which Chinese society was subsequently organized transformed the party into a new ruling class, with interests distinct from the Chinese proletariat and peasantry. Believing itself to be revolutionary, the Maoist wing of the party worked to avoid the problems of bureaucratization and authoritarianism, using the Soviet experience as a foil. But even as it called forth popular movements to de-bureaucratize the state, Mao and his allies were continually forced to choose between sanctioning the overthrow the system that guaranteed their continued ex-

istence as a class, or repressing the very popular energies they claimed to represent. Mao and his allies repeatedly chose the latter, ultimately weakening the self-activity of the Chinese proletariat, and clearing the way for the triumph of openly capitalist rule after Mao's death.

My take on the various elements of Maoist politics are varied, depending on the philosophical, theoretical, strategic, or methodological element in question. In general, I consider Maoism to be an internal critique of Stalinism that fails to break with Stalinism itself. Over many years, Mao developed a critical understanding of Soviet society, and of the negative symptoms it displayed. But at the same time, he failed to locate the cause of these symptoms in the capitalist social relations of the USSR, and thus failed to examine and break with many of the assumptions he shared with the Stalinist model. Thus Mao's politics remained fundamentally Stalinist, critiquing the USSR from a position as untenable in theory as it was eventually proven in practice. This piece makes an initial attempt to interrogate Maoist concepts in this context. Other militants will have to take this task further. Only when Maoism is subjected to an immanent critique and "digested" in this manner will it be possible to effectively re-embed elements of Maoist politics in a new, coherent political approach adequate to our present situation.

Before we start, I should outline my use of the term "state capitalism", a concept that is central element in my understanding of Mao's China. The term has been used in many different contexts. In Russia in the 1920s, anarchists such as Alexander Berkman and Voline, and left communist groups such as Gavril Myasnikov's Worker's Group, used the term to describe the kind of exploitative political and economic system they saw emerging in the USSR. Lenin used the term positively in the same period, to describe the method the Bolsheviks would use to industrially develop Russia under Bolshevik control, while preventing the return of the overthrown ruling

tion campaign soon got underway in the spring of 1957—now dubbed the "Hundred Flowers" campaign—without a clear answer to this question.

The Hundred Flowers campaigned began as a trickle of criticism of the party and Chinese society, but soon grew into a torrent that, in some parts of the country, bordered on a mass movement. By June 1957, large numbers of people were denouncing bureaucracy, corruption and favoritism among cadres in public forums. Some decried excesses in the crackdown on counter-revolutionary elements that had followed 1949, in which around 800,000 had been jailed or executed, including prominent intellectuals. Students made use of big character posters to critique authoritarianism and censorship, most notably at the "Democracy Wall" at Beijing University. While students and intellectuals were the most active demographic in the Hundred Flowers movement, criticisms also emerged in the army against the professionalization of the officer corps, and from workers demanding better wages and working conditions. A groundswell of student protests and even industrial strikes soon emerged across the country.

Criticisms emerged from a range of political quarters. Some intellectuals wanted China to transition to Western-style bourgeois democracy, while members of the overthrown bourgeoisie and landlord class advocated for a return to private enterprise. But other currents sought to deepen the revolution, in a manner that foreshadowed the "ultra-left" politics that would appear in the Cultural Revolution a decade later. The most renowned figure of the Hundred Flowers period, a student leader named Lin Hsi-Ling, critiqued the Chinese state from a Marxist perspective. Lin's writings argued that "the present upper strata of China does not correspond with the property system of common ownership" because "the party and state apparatus has become a set of bureaucratic organs ruling people without democracy." She thus advocated "not reform but a thoroughgoing change," and quickly gained a cult

13. The Hundred Flowers Campaign: 1956-1957

Mao weighed how best to execute the planned rectification campaign, in the wake of the Hungarian uprising. In February 1957, he delivered a speech entitled "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People" at a CCP conference. Mao used the distinction between antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions to analyze the conflicts at work in Chinese society. Antagonistic contradictions "between ourselves and the enemy" required the "method of dictatorship" to resolve, he insisted. But non-antagonistic contradictions "within the ranks of the people" could be acknowledged, managed and resolved through public "criticism and self-criticism," in a manner beneficial to socialist society. While social disturbances such as student and worker demonstrations were to be avoided, Mao argued, they could also be harnessed in a non-antagonistic manner, as a method to fix incorrect work methods. In this way, social contradictions could be ameliorated before they became antagonistic.

Mao's argument in "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People" implied a lenient approach to internal dissent, and much of the CCP leadership disagreed with him. As a result, the text of his speech remained unpublished for months, as high-level cadres argued over how to carry out a public rectification campaign while avoiding a Hungarian scenario. Throughout 1957, dueling editorials in the People's Daily debated over what limits that were to be placed on the impending tide of "blooming and contending" opinions. The rectifica-

classes to power. Marxists throughout the 20th century—such as Anton Pannekoek, Paul Mattick, C.L.R. James, Tony Cliff, Hillel Ticktin, and the Aufheben group—have worked to develop the term theoretically, in order to grapple with what happened in the USSR, and uncover the implications of the Soviet experience for revolutionary movements yet to come.

I use the term "state capitalist" to refer to any system in which the exploitation and capital accumulation described by Marx occurs in a system in which the vast majority of the means of production have been nationalized, or otherwise placed under the control of a state apparatus. In such a system, the fundamental aspects of capitalist social relations remain. A proletariat, defined by its lack of access to and control over the means of production and subsistence, is forced to alienate its labor to a separate social group and attendant institutions, which to an ever greater degree comes to resemble a distinct ruling class. As ongoing exploitation yields capital accumulation, this becoming-class continually expands its control over wealth and political power through its position in the relations of production, and determines the trajectory of the reproduction of society. The use values produced by the proletariat, and appropriated by the state, are distributed back to society under the direction of a bureaucratic ruling class; some of these are sold as commodities, paid for by the money earned through waged work, while others are sold on the global market.

Because this exploitation takes place under the auspices of a state-run economy, and often in states whose rulers believe themselves to be pursuing communism, state capitalism "looks" very different from other forms of capitalism. Wages, prices, commodities, and forms of ownership may be profoundly shaped by state intervention, and take different forms than in other capitalist societies. The Aufheben group in particular has explored the "deformations of value" that occurred in the USSR, when commodity exchange was greatly restricted, and money could no longer serve its historical role as the pri-

mary medium of capital accumulation. Nonetheless, as long as the conditions described above exist, "value" in the capitalist sense continues to exist as well. This "value" in the capitalist sense will provide the metric through which use-values are equated, production is conceptualized and coordinated, and foreign trade is conducted. The resulting "law of value" will tend to impose seemingly objective limits and presuppositions on those living under its auspices, including those in positions of state power—no matter their subjective intentions or political pedigree.

To explore the implications of this concept further, we must examine the broad path of the Chinese revolutionary experience. I begin at the transition from the late 19th to the early 20th century, when modern China was born in toil, fire and bloodshed.

rule. Now the CCP reversed course, and supported Soviet intervention against the revolution.68 By mid-November the Hungarian uprising had been crushed, with around 2,500 killed and thousands wounded, 13,000 imprisoned in the ensuing crackdown, and 200,000 driven from the country.

The events of 1956 posed theoretical and practical problems that would shape the rest of Mao's tenure in state power. On one side, the drawbacks of the Soviet model grew ever more apparent: cults of personality, "commandism" from party cadres, a brutal prison regime, and so on. On the other side, the Hungarian "incident" indicated that to lift the lid on mass dissent risked the destruction of state socialism at the hands of the proletariat. Could state socialist regimes cultivate political freedoms and public criticism, thereby avoiding the authoritarianism that hampered Stalin's Russia, while at the same time maintaining the stability of the state and its economy? Mao's answer to this question evolved over the ensuing years, as he built a critique of the USSR while working to retain many of its Stalinist assumptions. His first attempt came in 1957.

itly refuted the Soviet orthodoxy that all social contradictions cease to exist with the triumph of state socialism.

Mao followed in May 1956 with a call to "let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools of thought contend" at a CCP conference. Mao's "hundred flowers" speech was never published publicly, but the slogan of "blooming and contending" was taken up afterward by party cadres. Mao called on the party to liberalize Chinese society, and offer venues for the public to critique the CCP and social conditions. Soon party officials began planning a new rectification campaign, modeled on the rectification the CCP had undertaken in 1942, but this time open to other political parties and all social classes. The effort, which would become known as the Hundred Flowers campaign, was scheduled for 1957. Before it could be implemented, however, global events intervened the CCP's plan.

In late 1956, Khrushchev's political thaw exploded into an outright revolt against the Soviet rule in Eastern Europe. In October, the communist party in Poland refused to submit to control from CPSU in Moscow, and demanded organizational independence. Khrushchev was surprised by the move, and initially sanctioned the independence of the Polish party. His misstep opened the floodgates. A few days later, mass protests broke out in Hungary against Soviet rule, and by early November the uprising had turned into a full-fledged overthrow of the Soviet-backed state. Demonstrations rocked Hungarian cities, much of the Hungarian military sided with the protests, and armed workers councils soon began to supplant state authority.

When the Polish party sued for independence, the Mao initially supported them. On November 1st the CCP condemned the USSR's "big nation chauvinism," and advocated for the right of all countries to direct their own revolutions.67 But by the time the statement was released, the revolt in Eastern Europe had intensified: the workers seized power in Hungary, and were met with Soviet military force. On November 4th, the USSR sent columns of tanks into Hungary to re-establish Soviet

I.PROLOGUE:THE FIRST CHINESE REVOLUTION

1. The Emergence of Modern China

Revolutionary movements in China emerged from a contradictory process of economic and political development, which, starting in the 1800s, brought together pre-capitalist political and economic structures with rapid industrialization, political modernization and conflict with the West. The process led to massive social upheaval, the establishment of a modern political state, the development of anarchist and communist movements—and eventually, the emergence of Maoism.

In the mid-19th century, the British opened Chinese markets to foreign products with a series of imperialist conquests known as the Opium Wars. The advanced British military delivered punishing losses to the Qing dynasty, winning control of Hong Kong, and forcing down trade barriers to British goods. The defeat was a powerful blow to imperial pride, as it marked the first time in centuries the Chinese state had suffered so decisive a loss to a foreign power. Over the following decades, other imperial powers followed suit, forcing open Chinese markets at gunpoint, imposing war debts, and taking control of "concession" territories on the Chinese mainland where they enjoyed exclusive access to raw materials and industries. The French, Dutch, Russians, Americans and Japanese seized chunks of China in this manner throughout the late 1800s.

Imperialist domination generated upheavals in Chinese society, even as its Qing rulers struggled to modernize the empire. The Taiping and Boxer rebellions swept China in the 1800s, threatening both imperialist powers and the Qing state

12. The Crisis of De-Stalinization

In February 1956, at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), Nikita Khrushchev, general secretary after Stalin's death, delivered a "secret speech" exposing Stalin's crimes in Russia to the communist movement. While news of Stalin's show trials, executions, mass incarceration and general authoritarianism would not a surprise anarchists and left communists today, Khrushchev's revelations sent shockwaves through the world socialist movement at the time. In many countries, communist parties split in two over their position on the speech, and their relation to Khrushchev's Soviet Union. For Mao and his allies in the CCP, the speech confirmed their doubts about the Soviet path, and prompted a reassessment of the USSR's political and economic model.

In a flurry of new political writings, Mao assessed Stalin's leadership model, Soviet economic policy, and the CPSU's approach to internal dissent. In April 1956, Mao delivered a speech entitled "On the Ten Major Relationships" to the CCP Politburo. He outlined a range of conflicts at work within Chinese society, such as the relationship of heavy industry to light industry and agriculture, the relation between Han Chinese and national minorities, the relation between party cadre and non-party people, and so on. Describing these as "non-antagonistic contradictions," Mao prescribed policy measures and work methods that could address these differences in the service of a harmonious society. By casting the dynamics he observed as "contradictions" in a dialectical sense, Mao implic-

13,349 divorce cases were filed by women. National infrastructure was also expanded. 5,000 kilometers of rail lines and 14,000 kilometers of roads were constructed in the 1950s, while the number of university graduates rose by tens of thousands, and primary school graduates rose by the millions. By 1957, the vast majority of China's arable land had been cooperativized, and the vast majority of its industries were in the hands of the state. To CCP leaders, these changes in the forms of property constituted the transition from New Democracy to "socialism."

On the other hand, this development rested on grinding exploitation, and generated a bloated bureaucratic class. The number of state functionaries employed by the government rose from 720,000 in 1949, to 3.3 million in 1952, to 8.09 million in 1957. In Shanghai, the number of workers of all kinds grew by 1.2% each year from 1949 and 1957, while government staff grew by 16%. Peasant agriculture was still not mechanized, and thus work in the cooperatives remained highly labor intensive under the direction of cadres. In the factories, workers were regularly subjected to compulsory overtime and extra shifts to meet production quotas, and administrators often hoarded medical and welfare subsidies. In 1956, a wage reform emphasized production and the division of labor: the policy standardized pay scales across industries, fixed different pay grades to different skill levels, and abolished traditional allowances and bonuses unrelated to productivity. In Shanghai, the changes lowered workers' real wages by an average of 400 yuanper year. The development model reached a breaking point later that year—both in China and, simultaneously, in the Soviet bloc.

itself. At the turn of the century, a whole generation of Chinese intellectuals turned to revolution. Once Confucian education was abolished in 1905, many Chinese intellectuals pursued Western-style educations, traveling to Tokyo, Paris or London to study Western the natural and social sciences. As peasant and worker rebellions grew in force, this layer of students and intellectuals longed for a Chinese national state on par with the other global powers. These factors culminated in the 1911 overthrow of the Qing dynasty, and the founding of the first Chinese republic. Soon afterward, the "Revolutionary Alliance," a group of secret societies which had helped stage the revolution, formed the Chinese nationalist Kuomintang (KMT) party under the leadership of Sun Yat-Sen.

The overthrow of the Qing dynasty only deepened the social turmoil, however. By 1916 the country had collapsed into a checkerboard of territories controlled by local feuding warlord armies, and imperialists continued to dominate the coastal areas. Three years later, the nationalist May 4th Movement drew thousands into the streets to proclaim Chinese unity against imperialist domination. A small group of revolutionaries emerged from this experience to found the Communist Party of China (CCP) in 1921. The party held its first congress on a boat in a lake in Changsha, in Hunan province, with thirteen delegates representing fewer than sixty members in all.2 From this tiny beginning, the CCP quickly grew to a party of tens of thousands. It based its activities in the struggles of the growing Chinese proletariat, which itself comprised just one explosive sector of an impoverished and oppressed Chinese populace.

China in 1920 remained a predominantly peasant country, with little industrialization of agriculture. It was home to around 500 million peasants, most of whose living conditions had been deteriorating for decades. Since the 19th century, the population had expanded steadily without any growth in agricultural productivity, in the first phase of a Malthusian "dy-

nastic cycle" that had been repeated throughout Chinese history. Population growth, and a highly unequal distribution of land, led to steady shrinkage in the average peasant plot: by the 1930s, the average peasant family farmed a mere 3.3 acres. Drought and famine had become common occurrences, as had the practices of selling children into servitude, or marrying young women away against their will to rich landowners, in times of economic severity. The collapse of the Qing state then intensified exploitation and corruption, with landlords and warlords taking up to half the annual harvest in rents, and local officials engaging in tax gouging, or debt schemes to keep peasants in perpetual servitude. Under these pressures, the traditional peasant family structure began to break down, and mass peasant movements emerged for the first time, which fused peasants across clan lineages and broke traditional ties to the landlord class.

China in 1920 was also being rapidly transformed by industrialization. As industry expanded in coastal cities like Shanghai, the proletariat expanded at a heady rate. In 1919 there were a million workers in China, and the number had doubled by 1922. While small relative to the population, the Chinese working class was militant, and well connected to the global worker's movement at its world-historic height. In 1922 there were 91 strikes across the country involving 150,000 workers. In 1924, 100,000 workers marched in Shanghai to celebrate May Day, marching for an eight-hour day at a time when local workdays stretched from 12 to 16 hours. In 1925, 400,000 workers from Beijing to Guangzhou launched strikes and demonstrations against foreign exploitation.6The CCP grew amid this class struggle.

Perched atop the massive Chinese peasantry and restive proletariat was a bloated landlord class, and a newborn capitalist bourgeoisie. Some bourgeois sectors developed in the niches of the international trade imposed by foreign powers, and were thus sympathetic to imperialist forces. Others emerged in sec-

democratic management of a whole factory?" The alienation between rural cadres and urban workers further strained labor relations. In 1957, one cadre in Guangzhou rebuked employees at a machine works, who requested ventilation as temperatures hit 110 degrees: "When the Red Army was on the Long March, they managed to survive by eating tree bark, and you're saying when it's a bit warm in the workshop you can't work?"

Mao and his allies in the CCP pushed for a speedy transition from "New Democracy" to socialism. In 1955–1956, Mao moved to collectivize agricultural lands despite hesitancy from the right wing of the party. He first sought to establish "fully socialist" cooperatives in the countryside, in which dozens of peasant households would pool their land and tools, with donors receiving partial compensation, and members would thereafter be paid according to work hours. The move was a huge success: by late 1956 about 95% of peasant households were consolidated into such cooperatives. At the same time, Mao rapidly nationalized industries owned by "patriotic" national capitalists. Rather than organizing worker takeovers, the CCP offered capitalists dividends from the profits of their enterprises, while slowly removing them from management roles. Essentially, capitalists were bought out with pensions, and replaced by CCP cadres. In some factories this led to dramatic bureaucratization: the Ronghua Dye Company in Shanghai leapt from 2.5 full-time staff in 1949 to 52 after nationalization.

Economic development produced contradictory results. On the one hand, China saw substantial social improvements: living standards rose, and feudal practices such as selling children into servitude were banned. The most sustained feminist organizing of he Maoist era took place from 1950-1953, when a national Marriage Law legalized divorce and outlawed compulsory marriage, and was popularized in a mass campaign. Though many cadres and sections of Chinese society resisted the effort, women brought thousands of domestic abuse and divorce cases to court: in Shanghai in 1950, 77% of the city's

11. Development and Bureaucratization: 1950-1956

In the early 1950s the USSR and China were closely linked. Almost immediately after liberation, Chinese entry into the Korean War from 1950–1953 brought the two state socialist regimes together in a military bloc against U.S. invasion. Afterward, the CCP's first Five Year Plan, from 1953–1957, was formulated along Soviet lines. It prioritized the construction of heavy industry, energy and transportation infrastructure, and employed the help of Soviet technicians. The plan held the prices of agricultural products low, in order to feed workers in the industrializing cities. It also offered wage incentives to encourage people to work harder, while continually raising production targets. By 1956, 42% of Chinese workers were assigned to some form of piecework.

The CCP model placed industry under party control. An uptick in workers' struggles broke out in 1950 shortly after liberation, but cadres discouraged it in order tostabilize production, with the slogans "don't smash the old structure to pieces" and "preserve original positions, salaries and systems." In May 1953, the All China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) reaffirmed that the federation's main role was to promote production, not worker demands. In nationalized factories, representative bodies met rarely, and were often circumvented. As one trade union cadre put it: "holding a meeting of cadres will solve the problem just the same, so why do we have to hold [factory management committee] meetings?…Workers only know what happens in one workshop, so how can they participate in

tors that were threatened by outside imports, or otherwise hampered by the imperialist presence, and these tended to sympathize with nationalist sentiment. Many members of the bourgeoisie had themselves only recently emerged from the wealthy peasantry, and used their industrial profits to continue investing in land in the countryside. This stunted industrial development, further concentrated land ownership in a few privileged hands, and heightened rural exploitation according to the demands of capital accumulation.

With this configuration of classes, China displayed all the explosive potentials and glaring contrasts of a semi-colonial nation in the 1920s: It boasted a vast agricultural economy, much of it operating outside fully capitalist relations of production, and yet hyper-exploited by its integration in global flows of capital. It was led by a stagnant landlord class and a weak, foreign-dominated bourgeoisie, which was unwilling and unable to carry out a thoroughgoing bourgeois revolution and transform the political economy of the country. And it possessed a numerically small working class that nonetheless displayed all the militancy and revolutionary consciousness of the contemporary global worker's movement. How would these different classes relate to each other in a new revolutionary movement? What role should communist forces play in the development of such a revolution? These questions became crucial for the new CCP throughout the 1920s. Every step of the way, the CCP was guided organizationally and politically by the recently-founded USSR, through the Third International, or Comintern.

2. The Comintern: State Capitalist Foreign Policy

After the Russian Revolution of 1917, the Soviet Union held undisputed leadership over the world communist movement. This was true too in China, where the CCP developed under the close direction of the Comintern. The CCP was profoundly shaped by this relationship, both modeling itself after the Stalinist interpretation of Leninism, and working to break from Soviet control. This tension would become a defining feature of Maoism.

The history of the USSR and the Comintern is too lengthy to detail here, but some brief comments are necessary to frame its role in the Chinese class struggle. The Comintern was established in 1919 in Moscow, to direct what was seen at the time as an impending world revolution. The Russian Revolution had opened the floodgates, and now, it was believed, revolution would sweep the Western powers in quick succession, followed by the rest of the globe. But these hopes were dashed as the wave of working class revolt after World War I was defeated-notably with the cycle of failed German insurrections in 1918-19, and the defeated Italian factory occupations in 1920. These developments caught the Russian revolutionaries by surprise. For decades, Russian socialists believed their revolution would occur in tandem with a wave of revolutions in the developed capitalist countries, culminating in a world transition to socialism. Now they found themselves trapped in an undeveloped nation, surrounded by hostile powers, with little chance of world revolution breaking out anytime soon.

The years after liberation were a time of steady economic development and growing division in China. Drawing on the model of the Soviet Union, the party pursued a strategy of heavy industrialization and agricultural collectivization, greatly improving the standard of living in the country. However, class divisions also appeared and deepened within Chinese society, at the very moment the USSR encountered a global crisis of legitimacy after Stalin's death. Mao responded to these crises with the Hundred Flowers campaign and the Great Leap Forward. The former mobilization solicited mass critiques of Chinese society, only to prompt panic among party leaders and a vicious anti-Rightist crackdown. The latter sought to legitimize state socialist society through a dramatic mobilization of labor and development, but led to a humanitarian disaster and deep division among party leaders.

Mao's prestige suffered in the course of these events, and he was removed from some positions of power within the CCP. At the same time, the Sino-Soviet split heightened tensions between the world's two largest state socialist regimes. All these developments forced Mao to re-evaluate the Soviet model in depth, and develop his own conception of socialist transition. While unwilling to consider the idea that China was a class society, Mao came to view socialism as a transitional period rent by contradictions, with class enemies present in the ranks of the party itself. The resulting formulations remain a bedrock of Maoist politics today.

III.THE CCP IN STATE POWER

In this climate, the Soviet state went on the defensive. The turn was most clearly expressed in 1921, when the party suppressed the Kronstadt uprising, and established the New Economic Policy. After Lenin's death in 1924, Joseph Stalin and Nikolai Bukharin (who would eventually be tried and executed by Stalin in 1938) developed the theory of "socialism in one country." The theory claimed it was possible to fundamentally break with capitalist social relations, and establish a socialist society, within the institutional framework of a single nation-state. The Soviet state thus came to be viewed as an "outpost" of socialism in a capitalist world, whose survival alone sustained the possibility of world revolution in a reactionary period.

Stalin's theory was a distortion of Marxist understandings of revolution and the material basis for socialism. However, the Russian party was compelled to reform its theories in part out of material necessity. Finding themselves in control of an underdeveloped country, the rulers of would-be communist Russia chose to act as a surrogate bourgeoisie, in place of the ruling classes they had just deposed. After sanctioning the return of market relations in the countryside to address food shortages, the party carried out "primitive socialist accumulation" throughout the 1930s, hyper-exploiting the peasantry to feed the cities and fund the state, and thereby sustain a program of intense industrial development that the previous bourgeoisie could not accomplish. The Russian leaders believed they could carry out these tasks while remaining revolutionary communists; but they were wrong.

As Marx argued, social being ultimately determines social consciousness. Though the Soviet and Comintern leaders may have thought they were defending world revolution, they were increasingly simply defending the foreign policy interests of the ruling class of an emerging state capitalist country, which they had equated in name with the world proletariat. The theoretical orthodoxy produced in the USSR, and disseminated globally through the Comintern until World War Two, was pro-

foundly marked by this experience. What we call "Stalinism" today is essentially a distorted version of Marxist theory, taken up and reworked for use as the ideology of a new ruling class. This was the set of ideas upon which Chinese revolutionaries based their conception of revolution, and developed their own revolutionary theory.

When the CCP emerged in China in the 1920s, the Comintern was in its so-called "Second Period" under the leadership of Grigory Zinoviev (who would be tried and executed by Stalin in 1936). In this period, the Comintern rejected the possibility of world revolution in the near-term, and prioritized defending the Soviet state from the imperialist encroachment. The Comintern thus actively supported nationalist movements in territories controlled by the major imperialist powers. It also imposed the Bolshevik vanguard party as the universal model for communist parties across the globe. And it demanded the strict subordination of communist parties in other countries to the command and control of the Comintern in Moscow. While Comintern members may have believed this process would further the world revolution with which they equated the Soviet state, it objectively had the opposite effect.

from the norms of Stalinist dictatorships. It enjoyed a close relationship with the Chinese peasantry, in contrast with the Bolsheviks' separation from the Russian countryside. And it stood poised to enact a revolutionary strategy that, while more coherent than the confused Comintern lines of the 1920s, nevertheless shared many of their fundamental assumptions, including "socialism in one country," state capitalist development, and party substitutionism.

agrarian revolution. It was a remarkably humanitarian peasant army. As it won military victories, the population rallied to its side, and enemy units collapsed or defected in large numbers.

As the KMT collapsed and the Red Army swept toward the tropics, peasants across China began to seize land en masse. They took over lands not only from "traitors," in line with the CCP's moderate land reform policy, but from all manner of landlords. The upsurge forced the party to reassert control over mass self-activity again in 1948. Mao repeatedly warned against "adventurist policies": "The industrial and commercial holdings of landlords and rich peasants should in general be protected" he argued, and cadres should avoid "the mistake of applying in the cities the measures used in rural areas for struggling against landlords and rich peasants." Even at the height of the CCP's victory, Mao was unwilling to sanction agrarian revolution—or for that matter, forms of worker self-management—and risk frightening off the bourgeois sectors he would need to develop the country. Upon its arrival in southern China, the CCP found itself in control of the very coastal cities from which it had been expelled after 1927. The party returned as an organization of outsiders, inexperienced in running an industrial economy or urban centers. Mao instructed the army to administer the cities in 1949, but laterwas forced to call upon hostile civil servants to remain in their positions, defeated soldiers to re-enlist in the army, and capitalists from the "four great families" that had dominated the Chinese economy under imperialism to continue running their businesses. By September 1949, the party had swelled to 4.5 million members, of which 72% were poor and middle-poor peasants, 25% were rich peasants and members of the urban middle class, and a mere 2% were workers. With this organization at its helm, the People's Republic of China was officially founded in October 1949.

Alongside its military prowess, the new ruling party had developed work methods, theories and strategies that departed

3. The Disaster of 1927

Throughout the 1920s, the Comintern dispatched advisors and funds to the working class movement and CCP in China. In 1923, Comintern advisor Mikhail Borodin instructed the CCP to cease building an independent party, and merge its organization with the nationalist KMT. In line with the geopolitical strategy of the Soviet state, and its official interpretation of Lenin's Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism, Borodin believed a united nationalist movement in China would weaken global capitalism and thereby defend the USSR. The CCP followed the Comintern's directives and fused with the KMT in 1924, over the objections of some of its cadre. The same year, the Comintern helped establish the Whompoa Military Academy in Guangzhou, to help build the KMT military. Sun Yat-Sen died the following year, and KMT leadership was taken over by his son Chiang Kai-Shek. In 1926, Chiang was accepted as an honorary member of the Comintern, and the KMT was incorporated as an associate party.

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As the KMT ascended to power, its antagonism with the CCP became clear. Shortly after a general strike led by the Canton-Hong Kong strike committee brought Chiang Kai-Shek to power in March 1926, Chiang disbanded the strike committee and imprisoned many CCP members. At this "betrayal," CCP members moved to split with the KMT, but were prevented from doing so by Borodin, who instructed CCP members to apologize to Chiang, and refrain from conducting agrarian reforms or seizing private property in Guangzhou. The CCP dutifully followed suit.

With working class power stifled in the south, Chiang launched his military campaign in June 1926. Again the CCP organized strikes and uprisings ahead of Chiang's advancing

10. Liberation: 1946-1949

By the time Japan surrendered in 1945, the CCP had become a powerful force, on a far larger scale than what revolutionaries experience today. The party controlled 19 base areas, mostly in northern of China, and governed about 90 million people, the vast majority of them peasants. Party membership stood at 1.2 million, with the Red Army numbering 900,000, and the militia numbering 2.2 million. When World War II drew to a close, this force shifted from fighting the Japanese to again facing the KMT. In 1947, the Red Army took control of the whole of northern China in a series of offensive operations. Then, in a lightning campaign between late 1948 and 1949, it seized the whole of mainland China. Over the course of the year, the KMT collapsed and masses of people sided with the CCP's forces. It was a stunning military victory.

The Red Army offered a strong contrast to the other military forces at the time. The Japanese had engaged in a "three alls" scorched earth policy (burn all, kill all, loot all), which drove masses of volunteers into the ranks of the Red Army out of sheer self preservation. The KMT fed its conscripts starvation rations, and exercised brutal control over its troops in order to keep them from fleeing the battlefield. In one case, 200 KMT conscripts burned to death in a train bombed by the Japanese, because KMT officers refused to unlock the doors and risk them deserting. In contrast to both, the Red Army practiced Mao's "Three Rules of Discipline and Eight Points of Attention": red soldiers forced local despots to obey laws, paid peasants for the goods its troops used, largely refrained from abusing the population, and carried out agrarian reform if not

Army launched the Hundred Regiments Offensive against the Japanese in August 1940, and met with initial success. However, the Japanese counterattacked with a brutal scorched earth campaign, in which the Japanese military executed thousands, burned down whole villages, and deported tens of thousands of refugees to Manchuria. The party was set on its heels: by 1942 the population under CCP control had been cut in half, and the Eighth Route Army had lost 100,000 troops.

In the face of this crisis, the CCP initiated its first major rectification campaign in 1942. The rectification campaign sought to standardize the ideology and discipline of party members, and consolidate the sprawling organization. Cadres studied new educational materials on Marxism-Leninism—including, for the first time, works by Mao himself—and took part in collective self-criticism sessions, to root out contrary political views and secure group discipline. The campaign institutionalized forms of mass criticism used during the land reforms, and solidified a style of public confession that would reappear in mass mobilizations over the following years. In these campaigns, participants would be encouraged to describe their life experiences in intimate detail, and renounce conduct that deviated from the party's line. In this way, the party leadership secured not only political unity among its cadres, but also affective bonds of personal devotion.

The rectification campaign included a set of mobilizations to increase production and strengthen ties with the peasantry, and eventually veered into a purge of cadres accused of spying for the KMT, which in some cases involving beatings or killings. Mao also used the opportunity to further criticize Soviet-oriented party leaders, and cement his wing as the dominant tendency in the CCP. Shortly after the rectification was completed, Mao rose to the chairmanship of the party. In December 1941, the U.S. entered the Second World War, and the tide turned against Japan.

army. By February 1927, KMT troops were approaching the working class stronghold of Shanghai. The Shanghai General Labor Union called for a general strike to usher Chiang to power, fielding 350,000 workers in street battles, but Chiang halted his forces at the outskirts of the city and waited for the movement to exhaust itself. Only after a second wave of street fighting brought 500-800,000 workers into the streets, at great human cost, did Chiang take the city. With the industrial heart of China under his control and the workers exhausted, Chiang ordered his First Division troops—composed of revolutionary soldiers from Shanghai—out of the area. He then executed a purge of all communist forces in the city. CCP members were rounded up in raids on union and party offices. Hundreds were imprisoned, and others were executed in the street by gunshot orrow. The "May Thirtieth Movement" erupted in 1925, after protesters were killed in Shanghai's imperialist districts, leading to strikes across China's industrial areas. A wave of peasant insurrections swept Hunan province starting in 1926. As it participated in both these struggles, the CCP ballooned in size: from only 1,000 members at the start 1925, membership leapt to 10,000 with the May Thirtieth Movement; 30,000 by July 1926; and 58,000 by April 1927. The KMT was also emboldened by the wave of rebellions. In 1926, Chiang Kai-Shek launched a military campaign politically unify all of China and bring warlordism to an end. CCP cadres moved in tandem to help bring the KMT to power. As Chiang's armies moved through southern China, the CCP mobilized 1.2 million workers and 800,000 peasants in a series of strikes and uprisings.8As the KMT ascended to power, its antagonism with the CCP became clear. Shortly after a general strike led by the Canton-Hong Kong strike committee brought Chiang Kai-Shek to power in March 1926, Chiang disbanded the strike committee and imprisoned many CCP members. At this "betrayal," CCP members moved to split with the KMT, but were prevented from doing so by Borodin, who instructed CCP members to apolo-

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Chiang's "coup" didn't pass without consequence: to the south, the left-wing elements of the KMT holding power in Wuhan split with Chiang. The CCP leadership sought to take the lead in the situation by forming soviets of workers and peasants in the city, but were again restrained by the Comintern. To Stalin, the left-KMT government was the "center of the revolutionary movement" in China, and the CCP should actively support it. The CCP relented, thereby clearing the way for the Wuhan government to conduct its own suppression of the communists in May 1927, before reuniting with Chiang. At this point, Borodin and other Comintern advisors were forced to flee China. By late 1927 the Comintern had run out of bour-

tionaries using these philosophies have come to view individual consciousness as a direct imprint of one's class position: every argument opposed to one's own is denigrated as concealing a "petit-bourgeois" outlook, and workers who take up popular ideas for their own use are lambasted for displaying "false consciousness". In other cases, Marx's dialectic is interpreted not as a philosophy enabling social thought and action (whether as a dialectical method of thinking and practice, or as a theory of actually-existing dialectical processes in social and physical phenomena, which may yet be discovered and enriched) but as a set of given objective laws, to which all practice and creativity must conform, much like the laws of physics.

Maoists today need not replicate the same applications of Mao's philosophy. However, today's revolutionaries must evaluate Mao's writings in a critical manner, and compare his philosophy with other competing conceptions, in order to arrive at a full appraisal of Maoist philosophical categories. Many currents in Marxist philosophy, whether emerging from the work of Lukacs, C.L.R. James or Gramsci, take consciousness and creative action seriously. Mao, by contrast, recapitulates an orthodox Stalinist philosophy. For Mao, the dialectic is a universal law inscribed in all physical matter and social phenomena, which has already been discovered. Rather than apply it asa practical method, Mao embraces it as positivist scientific truth.

By the early 1940s, Mao and the CCP leadership in Yan'an had developed a range of new work methods, strategies and theories: the mass line, the united front, prolonged people's war, New Democracy, and a particular conception of the dialectic. At the same time, the party, army and mass organizations had grown by huge leaps, expanding twentyfold since 1937. Now, at the height of its renewal, the party began to suffer setbacks. In 1940 the Second United Front eroded, as clashes between the Red Army and the KMT escalated into a KMT blockade of the territory around Yan'an. As a result, inflation began to spiral out of control in CCP base areas. Undeterred, the Red

non-antagonistic, under New Democracy? Was global imperialism the primary contradiction in the world today, or the contradiction between capitalism and socialism? Mao's categories helped him to develop effective strategies to address these questions, and as such, they attest to his skill as a politico-military strategist. However, there is little in his use of these concepts that warrants the term "dialectic" or "contradiction". For example, Mao fails to distinguish a non-antagonistic contradiction from a simple conflict of interest. Similarly, the manner in which he employs the distinction between primary and secondary contradictions is little different from the divide and rule strategies theorized by Machiavelli. Mao's formulations serve the same purposes as these concepts, while jettisoning other qualities particular to the notion of a "dialectic": the necessary self-movement of phenomena generated by internal contradictions, or the supersession of different forms of the phenomena through negations. As Martin Glaberman has pointed out, Mao's philosophy lends itself to an interpretation which views contradictions as simple oppositions, without self-movement of their own, and which may be easily manipulated through outside intervention. Throughout the 1950s, Mao himself wrote regularly of the party "resolving" contradictions in Chinese society through policy. Contradictions thus become, not active processes that continually generate change through their own internal dynamics, but a switch that can be manipulated by sovereign powers.

No philosophy can be directly equated with a single political line. By definition, philosophies are abstract sets of ideas, which may be interpreted in a variety of ways as they are brought to bear in practice. However, depending on their formulations, philosophies may incline those who take them up toward some interpretations of reality and practice, and away from others. Historically, reductive materialism and empiricism, which Maoism shares with Stalin's "diamat," has led revolutionaries in many negative directions. In some cases, revolu-

geois allies, and finally reversed its course, calling for a split with the KMT and the immediate formation of worker and peasant soviets. It was too late: a "Canton commune" briefly flared to life in Guangzhou in December 1927, with little popular participation. It was crushed by local armies, leaving another 5,000 revolutionaries dead.

The Comintern's interventions in the 1920s displayed the contradictions of would-be revolutionaries at the helm of a capitalist state. On the one hand, leaders like Stalin, Zinoviev and Bukharin believed worker and peasant power was the goal of revolutionary movements in underdeveloped contexts, and they advocated for it in word. On the other hand, they were compelled to prioritize building strong nationalist allies, as the shortest path to undermining other world imperialist powers and thereby defending the Soviet state. This was the line they followed in deed, repeatedly constraining, limiting and delaying class struggle, and ultimately guaranteeing its defeat. The experience fundamentally altered the path of Chinese communism.

4. The Turn to the Countryside

The debacles of 1927 decimated the working class movement, and permanently undermined the relationship between the working class and the CCP. In 1927, 3 million Chinese workers were in trade unions, but by 1928 that number was halved, and by 1932 the number had shrunk to 410,000. Class struggles throughout the 1930s remained defensive in character, and were often dominated by corporatist unions set up under Chiang's regime. In some cases striking workers berated CCP cadres, or pleaded with them to leave, arguing that communist extremism would get them killed. Comintern representatives in Moscow were forced to admit that the workers had rejected the CCP as a result of its disastrous strategic errors. The broken relationship between the CCP and the class it purported to represent was reflected in the CCP's membership. In early 1927 before Chiang's crackdown, the CCP had 58,000 members, of which 58% were industrial workers. While the party rebounded after 1928, and continued to grow in numbers throughout the 1930s as it developed its rural base, the party's relationship with the working class was irreparably shattered: the proportion of workers in the party soon shrank to 1%.

In this context, the CCP turned its attention to the peasantry in the countryside—a strategic shift that would eventually bring Mao to prominence. Mao Tse-tung, son of a wealthy peasant from Hunan province, had been one of the founders of the CCP in 1921. In 1927, Mao published Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan, chronicling the wave of peasant rebellions in that province. His report identified the poor peasantry as a revolutionary class in underde-

thing is destroyed, even as elements of it are incorporated at a higher level in a new phenomena. In place of negation, Mao emphasizes the process through which the "principal" and "non-principal" sides of a contradiction transform each other, and trade places:

> the principal and the non-principal aspects of a contradiction transform themselves into each other and the nature of the thing changes accordingly. In a given process or at a given stage in the development of a contradiction, A is the principal aspect and B is the non-principal aspect; at another stage or in another process the roles are reversed—a change determined by the extent of the increase or decrease in the force of each aspect in its struggle against the other in the course of the development of a thing.

Here Mao's notion of dialectics stays well within the bounds of classical Chinese philosophy, in which contradictions (maodun) are conceived of as simply a unity of opposites that mutually change one another. For Mao, contradictions are composed of two discrete elements, which may become more or less antagonistic, and which may alternate as the dominant term within the overall unity. However, this relationship is not as a process with its own internal momentum, and it does not culminate in a negation in which the content of the terms themselves are transformed. Instead, the contradiction is composed of a formal opposition between two separate elements, which oscillate back and forth even as their content remains constant, in a manner similar to a toggle switch.Mao's formulation of dialectics was not without heuristic power. His distinctions between primary/secondary and antagonistic/non-antagonistic contradictions allowed him to conceptualize political relationships within Chinese society and outside it. Was the relationship between the party and the national bourgeoisie antagonistic, or

In this passage, Knowledge and Reason blur together. Mao essentially says one can grasp the dialectical essence of phenomena by steadily stacking empirical perceptions on top of each other, until a conceptual leap takes place by unexplained means. Mao's account of consciousness thus remains more rudimentary than Hegel and many other Marxist philosophers. For the latter, dialectical Reason involves active cognitive work upon Knowledge categories, and takes place through a process of dialectical oppositions, negations, and leaps. In place of this, Mao sees in thought only the gradual accumulation of empirical data, generating new categories of thought, which are then tested in practice. At this level of sophistication, there is little to distinguish Mao's notion of cognition and practice from that of a natural scientist. A third feature of Mao's philosophy is his original additions to the notion of "contradiction" itself. In On Contradiction, for example, Mao establishes a distinction between "primary" and "secondary" contradictions. He argues that "there are many contradictions in the process of development of a complex thing, and one of them is necessarily the principal contradiction whose existence and development determine or influence the existence and development of the other contradictions." Mao takes Chinese society as an example: the contradiction between Chinese nationalism and Japanese imperialism is the primary contradiction at the moment, displacing the contradiction between the CCP and the KMT and allowing for the Second United Front, but when Japan is defeated the order will change again.

Mao also distinguishes between antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions: "Some contradictions are characterized by open antagonism, others are not. In accordance with the concrete development of things, some contradictions which were originally non-antagonistic develop into antagonistic ones, while others which were originally antagonistic develop into non-antagonistic ones." At the same time, he downplays the notion of "negation," a process through which some-

veloped China, and criticized the CCP's tendency to oppose peasant "excesses" in rural insurrections. After Chiang's crackdown in Shanghai in September 1927, Mao launched an uprising to take the city of Changsha, but was defeated. He managed to flee afterward into the mountainous region separating Hunan and Kiangsi provinces with about 1,000 men.

Gradually, Mao's military forces and prestige in the CCP began to grow. First a column of CCP soldiers led by Chu Teh, then a rebel KMT unit led by P'eng Te-Huai, and finally two bandit gangs merged with Mao's forces. The resulting army numbered about 10,000 soldiers, about one out of every five of whom carried a rifle. With this force, Mao managed to repel three expeditionary attacks over the following months, and carry out agrarian reforms that won him personal renown among the peasantry. Clashes to the north soon drew KMT armies into other conflicts, allowing the CCP to establish further bases in the rural areas of southern China. After a failed attack on Changsha ordered by the Comintern failed in 1930, the entire CCP leadership relocated to Mao's base area in Kiangsi. The period of rural guerrilla war had begun.

The politics of the ensuing Chinese revolution, and Mao's politics in particular, were profoundly shaped by the experiences of the CCP in the 1920s and 1930s. After doggedly following Soviet leadership into defeat after defeat, the party was forced to develop its own theory and strategy, drawn more clearly from Chinese conditions. Eventually Mao would develop a distinctly Chinese version of Marxism-Leninism through a critique of Stalin's Russia. Already in the 1930s, the party seemed headed in that direction. Its shift to rural base areas contrasted with the Russian experience, wherein a generation of revolutionaries had forsaken the countryside to focus almost exclusively on the urban working class. In Russia the Bolsheviks seized power through urban insurrections, and only formed a Red Army at the onset of the Russian Civil War.

In the 1930s, by contrast, the CCP set out on a prolonged, mobile, and rural military strategy.

Independent developments in the CCP would eventually establish the bedrock of what would come to be called "Maoism." However, as we will see, the new theories developed by Mao and his allies in the party were fundamentally marked by the influence of the Soviet Union, and inherited many of Stalin's theoretical and strategic assumptions.

to the active nature of thought. In works such as the Science of Logic, Hegel distinguishes between three levels of cognition: First, basic sensory perception of phenomena. Second, "Knowledge", which organizes these sense data into a system of categories of thought (for example, our experience of the color green, the texture of rough bark, and the sound of wind in leaves, all become "tree"). While the categories of Knowledge are essential for human activity, they can also limit us. In Hegel's system, a further transformation must take place in order for our mental categories to grasp the world around us in its essence: seemingly coherent Knowledge categories must themselves blossom with internal dialectical oppositions, and go through successive negations, in order to produce qualitative leaps in cognition that recontextualize all pre-existing Knowledge. Hegel refers to this third, dialectical level of cognition as "Reason". For Marxists such as C.L.R. James, Reason is the mental operation needed to grasp dialectical contradictions inherent in social phenomena themselves.

Mao's philosophical texts collapse Knowledge and Reason, however, and fail to make a clear distinction between the two. The first level of cognition is apparent in On Practice: "In the process of practice, man at first sees only the phenomenal side, the separate aspects, the external relations of things. … This is called the perceptual stage of cognition, namely, the stage of sense perceptions and impressions." Then, Mao explains,

> As social practice continues, things that give rise to man's sense perceptions and impressions in the course of his practice are repeated many times; then a sudden change (leap) takes place in the brain in the process of cognition, and concepts are formed. Concepts are no longer the phenomena, the separate aspects and the external relations of things; they grasp the essence, the totality and the internal relations of things.

up precisely this formulation as his own: "So-called consciousness…is only a form of matter in movement. It is a particular property of the material brain of humankind. It allows material processes external to consciousness to be reflected in consciousness, which is a particular property of the material brain." "Impressions and concepts," he argues, are "the reflection of objective things, a photographic image and sample copy of them." In Mao's view, what we experience as consciousness is ultimately a property of the motion of brain matter, and concepts themselves are only a kind of imprint or impression of the world's physical matter upon the matter of our brains. Later in his Lecture Notes, Mao carries this logic to its conclusion, arguing that Hegel's idealist dialectic was simply a mirror image of the dialectical dynamic that exists in all physical matter, much like a law of physics.

Mao's formulation is a reworking of ideas from Engel's Dialectics of Nature and Lenin's Materialism and Empirio-Criticism, which were later reified by Stalin. In it, thought is not viewed as an active substance, nor as something shaped by social relationships. Instead it is something passive and individual, upon which physical matter leaves an imprint. Physical matter, in turn, is said to be determined by a universal dialectical law. Like Lenin and Stalin before him, Mao insists his view is different from "mechanical materialists". But ultimately, Mao's conception itself remains a form of reductive materialism. As council communist Anton Pannekoek observed in his 1938 book Lenin as Philosopher, this variety of materialism is typical of Marxist revolutionary movements in countries battling feudal conditions and ideologies. Pitted against ancient idealist philosophies, such revolutionaries tend to draw upon the materialism prevalent inthe advanced capitalist countries, and inadvertently inherit the latter's embrace of positivism, itself a philosophical counterattack against revolutionary Marxism. A second feature of Mao's philosophical writings is Mao's tendency toward empiricism, reflected in his lack of attention

II.PEOPLE'S WAR FROM THE COUNTRYSIDE

5. The Chinese Soviet Republic and the Long March: 1931-1935

The CCP declared the founding of a "Chinese Soviet Republic" in rural Kiangsi province in November 1931, with Mao presiding as its president. From there, the CCP eventually established fifteen base areas across southern China. Even in this period, however, the Comintern struggled to retain control over the party. In 1931 the so-called "28 Bolsheviks," a group of CCP cadre trained in Sun Yat-Sen University in Moscow, maneuvered to lessen Mao's influence take control of the party Politburo. Wang Ming, theoretical leader of the group and Mao's main rival, advocated using base areas as static defensive headquarters, from which to launch direct seizures of urban areas. Mao opposed this idea, and advocated instead for gradually encircling the cities through mobile warfare. Mao repeatedly clashed with Comintern forces, and suffered diminished influence in the party.

Conflicts within the CCP took place in the backdrop of constant KMT attacks. The KMT launched a total of five "extermination campaigns" against the CCP-controlled territories from 1930-1935, of which the first four were defeated. KMT columns regularly charged into CCP base areas, only to be isolated and destroyed by the elusive and mobile Red Army. Mao began to develop his theory of modern guerrilla warfare through these remarkable campaigns. Yet even as the civil war raged, Japan invaded northeastern China, seizing Rehe province in a series of offensives and annexations from 1931 to 1933. From this point

ena to the properties of physical matter. Stalin stifled the debate in the 1930s, imprisoning and executing many scholars, and gradually imposing his own synthesis of the two positions in the form of "dialectical materialism" or "diamat". Diamat viewed the dialectic as a universal law present in thought, social systems, and the natural world, and generally reduced the former to the latter. It would remain the official state philosophy of the USSR for decades.

The new Soviet state philosophy became the basis for Mao's study of dialectics, through recently-translated Soviet textbooks. In Yan'an, Mao drew on texts such as A Course on Dialectical Materialism by Shirokov and Aizenberg (to which Mao gave nearly 13,000 characters of notation), and Dialectical and Historical Materialism and Outline of a New Philosophy by Mitin. Long sections of Mao's Dialectical Materialism (Lecture Notes) are made up of verbatim, or slightly altered, transcriptions of the Soviet texts. These manuals served as the baseline through which Mao synthesized his reading of other first-generation Chinese Marxists such as Li Da and Ai Siqi, and of the Marxist texts that had been translated into Chinese years before: Engels' Anti-Durhing and Dialectics of Nature, Lenin's Materialism and Empirio-Criticism and brief selections from his Philosophical Notebooks, Marx's Capital vol. I and Poverty of Philosophy, and Stalin's On the Problems of Leninism. The resulting synthesis displays three defining characteristics.

The first is a form of reductive materialism. In contrast with Marxist philosophies that view consciousness as an active process shaped by social relationships, Mao's philosophy reduces consciousness to physical matter itself, through a "reflection theory" of consciousness. In his Lecture Notes, Mao at first works to distinguish his philosophy from such "pre-Marxist materialism (mechanistic materialism)," which he argues "did not emphasize the dynamic role of thought in knowledge, attributing it only with a passive role, and perceiving it as a mirror which reflected nature." But a few pages later, Mao takes

9. Mao and the Dialectic

Mao also used Yan'an period to deepen his philosophical acumen. For some time, Mao had been criticized by Wang Ming of the "28 Bolsheviks" group for his shallow understanding of Marxist philosophy. In Yan'an Mao was finally able to address this criticism. In the late 1930s, Mao formed a philosophy study group among the CCP leadership, meeting in his study three nights a week. From these discussions Mao produced On Practice and On Contradiction, the two main philosophical texts of Maoism, in July and August 1937. In the same time period, Mao also produced Dialectical Materialism (Lecture Notes), which were used for internal party education, but never published independently. These texts indicate Mao's understanding of the link between thought and practice, as well as his relationship to Stalinist theory. They provide a window into the philosophy underpinning Maoist politics.

Mao's version of dialectics relied heavily on a philosophical orthodoxy that had then recently been established in the USSR. Ten years prior, philosophical debate in the Comintern had led to the ouster of Karl Korsch and Gyorgy Lukacs, Marxist philosophers who retained a commitment to the dialectic as a method of thought and social practice, while opposing efforts impute dialectics to the natural world. After their removal, Soviet philosophical debates refocused on the relationship of dialectics to natural science. A division then emerged between "dialectician" and "mechanist" wings of Soviet scholars:dialecticians urged scientists to discover dialectical processes in the natural world, whilemechanists rejected philosophy as scholasticism, and reduced social and mental phenom-

on, an impending war with Japan hung over the internal conflict in China.

A full assessment of Mao's military theory is beyond the scope of this document. However, Mao's military strategy must be be recognized as a major advance in military theory worldwide. Mao's military texts are not only studied by revolutionaries from all political traditions, but also by the capitalist ruling classes—Mao's writings are required reading for U.S. military cadets at Westpoint. In the Kiangsi period, texts such as Why is it that red political power can exist in China?and The Struggle in the Chingkiang Mountains, established the foundation for classics such as On Guerilla Warfare that would come later.

Despite its growing military prowess, the CCP was forced to abandon its base areas in southern China during the KMT's fifth extermination campaign. From October 1933 to October 1934, the KMT gradually tightened a noose around CCP territories, constructing fixed defenses with each advance. Unable to defeat these forces in conventional assaults, the CCP initiated an extended strategic retreat that became the stuff of legend: the "Long March". The Long March took over a year to complete, consisting of a series of maneuvers that stretched thousands of kilometers from Kiangsi to the remote areas of Yunan and Xikang, before finally ending in a new base area in the northwest of China centered in the city of Yan'an. Several CCP columns conducted the retreat separately, engaging in daily combat with KMT forces, local warlords and tribal armies.

The Long March sparked the ascendance of Mao to the leadership of the party, a decisive break with Soviet control, and the gradual marginalization of the party's Soviet-oriented leaders. Over the course of the retreat, the CCP lost contact with the Comintern completely: communication was broken in August 1934, when the CCP's underground radio transmitter in Shanghai was destroyed. In January 1935 the CCP Politburo held a meeting in Zunyi, in Kweichow province in southwest China. The "28 Bolsheviks" group was criticized for their failed mil-

itary strategy, and officially dissolved. Several of the group's members joined Mao's wing of the party, while Wang Ming remained in Moscow. Only after winning control of the party did Mao re-establish radio contact with the Soviets, a year and a half later, in June 1936.

The CCP escaped the KMT only after a great sacrifice: from 90-100,000 men at the start of the Long March, the Red Army was reduced to 7-8,000 under Mao's command upon arrival in the north in autumn of 1935. It grew to a total of 22,000 as scattered columns arrived over the following months. Soon afterward, however, the approaching war with Japan granted the party a temporary reprieve from KMT attacks. Chinese public opinion grew increasingly critical of the civil war as the threat of Japanese imperialism loomed nearer. In 1936, the Comintern began pressing the CCP to form an alliance with the KMT against the Japanese, in line with its "Popular Front" strategy against global fascism (which, at that moment, was sacrificing the Spanish revolution to bourgeois stability in Europe). Mao supported this move and negotiated with the KMT, but he refused to merge his party or army with Chiang's for fear of repeating the disasters of 1927. Talks dragged on for months.

The question of the alliance was eventually settled by conflicts within the KMT itself. In December 1936, two of Chiang's own generals kidnapped Chiang in Xi'an, demanding he cease attacks on the CCP and focus on the imperialist enemy. Chiang relented, and a shaky "Second United Front" between the two parties was secured. Japan launched an all-out invasion of China seven months later, in July 1937. For the time being, the CCP and KMT paused hostilities to confront Japanese imperialism.

market, or supplement for them by hyper-exploiting their own populations. They must compete with other capitalist countries through trade, currency, and military might. All these factors require underdeveloped socialist states to carry out capitalist production and development in some form, often through a close alliance with the preexisting bourgeoisie. Mao's formulations of the united front and New Democracy explicitly aim at this outcome, and provide ideological legitimation for doing so. The strategies formulated in Yan'an thus provide a justification for would-be communist parties to act as surrogate bourgeoisies in underdeveloped contexts, and to generate a new capitalist ruling class which believes itself to act in the name of the proletariat and socialism.

ests with those of other classes. Throughout the 1940s, Mao repeatedly cautioned cadres against supporting seizures of land or private property, for fear of alienating progressive sectors of the bourgeoisie. After the revolution, the party then sought to create a friendly environment for bourgeois industrialists while preparing to substitute party cadres in their place. In 1953, Mao would reassure a group of industrialists and liberal politicians:

Some workers are advancing too fast and won't allow the capitalists to make any profit at all. We should try to educate these workers and capitalists and help them gradually (but the sooner the better) adapt themselves to our state policy, namely, to make China's private industry and commerce mainly serve the nation's economy and the people's livelihood and partly earn profits for the capitalists and in this way embark on the path of state capitalism.

The class collaboration inherent in the united front and the New Democracy strategy secured the victory of the CCP in the war. At the same time, it guaranteed the party's gradual slide from a revolutionary organization with an intimate relationship to the oppressed and exploited classes, to a force dominating over them. These strategies, in turn, were required in order to pursue "socialism in one country." For an underdeveloped country such as China in the 1940s, rapid improvement of living standards is a paramount task of any revolution. A world revolution, or at least a regional revolution that includes a chunk of the advanced capitalist zones, is able to accomplish this task without relying on capitalist exploitation. Communes in advanced capitalist countries are able to freely share supplies, technologies and skills with their counterparts in the global periphery. But when limited to the bounds of a single nation-state, and embedded in a capitalist world-system, this kind of transformation is impossible.

Under these conditions, underdeveloped socialist states must either pay for the resources they acquire on the world

6. The Yan'an heritage: 1935-1945

The city of Yan'an in Shaanxi province served as the central headquarters of the CCP throughout the war. Yan'an was a remote and impoverished city of 40,000, where party leaders lived in dwellings built out of caves in the hilly terrain. From its refuge the CCP coordinated work in sixteen base areas across China, and steadily expanded its organization. The party published theoretical journals and daily newspapers, built radio stations, installed telephone lines, and founded primary schools for the populace and party academies for cadres. It established small manufacturing and textile factories, using equipment that troops had carried with them on the Long March. Mao developed his first distinctive theoretical and strategic formulations in this period, which is often seen as the "heroic phase" of the Chinese revolution.

The party and the army grew by incredible proportions over a few short years: from 20,000 members in 1936, the CCP expanded to 40,000 in 1937, leapt to 200,000 in 1938, and finally reached 800,000 in 1940. The Red Army withdrew from major engagements for its first few years in the north, and expanded from 22,000 survivors to 180,000 soldiers in 1938, and 500,000 in 1940. At the same time, mass organizations of youth, women, poor peasants, and other social categories were established in the villages to create alternate bases of leadership from the landlord class with its clan affiliations. In the base area surrounding Yan'an in the 1940s, there were 45,000 members in the party's labor association, 168,000 in its youth association,

and 173,800 in its women's federation.19 Most of those who joined the party in the 1930s and 1940s were young men from poor peasant households. They were politically undeveloped and sometimes illiterate, but fiercely devoted to improving the plight of Chinese peasants, and defeating imperial domination.

The CCP dramatically transformed social relations in the countryside. Land reforms, elections, and public tribunals against abusive landlords and other exploiters, became a distinguishing feature of the CCP base areas, unseating the entrenched power of the landlord class. These mobilizations employed a repertoire of practices that were to become commonplace in Chinese politics—including mass criticism sessions, public confessions with occasional beatings, and the use of dunce caps or placards to identify targets of critique. Hundreds of thousands of peasants made use of the party'sorganizational vehicles to denounce and punish their exploiters. Thousands of abusive landlords and creditors were punished, and hundreds of new local governments were put in place. By 1944, 50-75% of the peasants in CCP-controlled territories had taken part in some kind of moderate land reform.

Gender relations were not so profoundly transformed. Like most parties in the communist tradition, the CCP maintained control over its mass organizations, and constrained their actions according to the party's overall strategy. With the shift to rural areas, the CCP leadership limited the party's action on women's issues, in order to maintain smooth relations with the peasant population, and the party's predominantly male recruitment pool. Women in many base areas were encouraged to fulfill domestic roles, contributing to the movement through household textile production, and at the same time discouraged from raising independent demands. In a 1942 speech, Peng Te-Huai (then deputy commander of the Eighth Route Army) argued that feminist slogans should only be raised if they didn't conflict with other spheres of the peasant movement, and slogans such as "freedom of marriage" should not be raised un-

ing "from socialism to communism," the Soviet Union in 1940 was implementing state capitalist developmentalism based on strict control of the working class. In this period, Russian workers faced six months probation for arriving 20 minutes late to work, and 4-6 months in prison for quitting a job. Stalin's purges had already executed the vast majority of the Bolsheviks who had helped bring the party to power, and the Soviet prison system housed upwards of 2 million people for alleged "counterrevolutionary" crimes. In such an era, national liberation struggles allied with the USSR objectively strengthened the state capitalist wing of global capitalism (what Mao would later label "social imperialism"), not socialism.

Mao's faith in the party rested on what some have called "party substitutionism." Like much of the Leninist tradition, Mao assumes the party constitutes the historical memory and theoretical brain of the global proletariat, and can transparently represent its ultimate interests. The party thus comes to stand in for the proletariat by way of syllogism, "substituting" party for class. Because of these assumptions, Mao believes it is possible for the party to quell class struggle under the united front, and implement capitalist development under New Democracy, while retaining its revolutionary trajectory. This position ultimately lapses into idealism. If social being determines social consciousness, then any party's stated politics and class allegiances can be reshaped by the concrete social relations within which it operates. Just as a "progressive" CEO is forced to twist his egalitarian ideas in order to maintain his economic position, the same is true of a "communist" party at the helm of a capitalist economy, even one which is heavily nationalized. The theory of "New Democracy" willfully ignores these concerns through a series of Leninist assumptions.

When implemented in practice over the following years, the united front and New Democracy helped guarantee victory over Japan. But it also inevitably required the party to constrain worker and peasant struggles, in order to balance their inter-

Under New Democracy, China will be ruled by a "joint dictatorship of several anti-imperialist classes" that will suppress pro-imperialist and feudal forces, but it will mainly be led by "the proletariat and the Communist Party." Even though "the republic will neither confiscate capitalist private property in general nor forbid the development of such capitalist production," Mao insists that "state enterprises will be of a socialist character and will constitute the leading force in the whole national economy." From a position of state power, the party will then be able to guide Chinese society peacefully into socialism.

Mao believes the shift from New Democracy to socialism is possible for three reasons. First, he views all anti-imperialist struggles as objectively anti-capitalist. Mao accepts the Comintern orthodoxy built upon Lenin's Imperialism, which argues that imperialism is a necessary aspect of capitalism in its present stage of development, and that nationalist struggles thus weaken world capitalism and bring world socialism closer. For Mao, as for Stalin, every anti-imperialist revolution "inevitably becomes part of the proletarian-socialist world revolution." This claim is supported by his second assertion, that the political leadership and material support of the USSR will help anti-imperialist struggles move in a socialist direction. "The Soviet Union," Mao argues, "has reached the period of transition from socialism to communism and is capable of leading and helping the proletariat and oppressed nations of the whole world." Third, Mao believes that the leadership of the CCP itself guarantees the socialist trajectory of the revolution. The leadership of the "proletariat and the Communist Party," will complement growth in "the state sector of the economy…and the co-operative sector of the economy" to ensure the transition to socialism.

Mao's assessment of the USSR, his belief in the infallibility of the party, and his open embrace of nationalized industry, were all deeply misplaced. Mao himself would eventually be forced to grapple with these facts in the late 1950s. Far from transition-

til the peasants were fully mobilized. In other cases, slogans such as "equality between men and women" should be raised in word, but not implement them in deed.

This approach was criticized by an opposition current in the party, and most visibly by Ting Ling, a party member who had been active in feminist and free love circles in the cities in the 1930s. In a 1942 article for International Women's Day in Yan'an's Liberation Daily, Ting argued that party policies and the culture of Yan'an placed women in a double-bind. On one hand, they were expected to participate fully in political life, and were criticized if they fell short; on the other, they were expected to fulfill traditional gender roles, and were criticized if they broke with gender norms.Women's situation was thus contradictory and untenable. Against those "who make fine speeches bragging about the need to first acquire political power," Ting argued that "if women want equality, they must first strengthen themselves." Ting's piece was rebuked by Mao and other party leaders, and Ting underwent self-criticism before being removed from political duties for two years.24 Party positions on gender would eventually relax somewhat in the 1940s, as women were encouraged to take part in land reforms, and permitted to raise independent demands within limits.

The CCP leadership gradually standardized a set of work methods to implement through its massive organizational apparatus. The most distinctive innovation in work methods was the "mass line," employed by party cadres in its mass organizations. The mass line was a method of leadership first developed in the CCP base areas in the south, which was fully elaborated and implemented in the 1940s. With the mass line, cadres were to

> take the ideas of the masses (scattered and unsystematic ideas) and concentrate them (through study turn them into concentrated and systematic ideas), then go to the masses and propagate and

> explain these ideas until the masses embrace them as their own, hold fast to them and translate them into action, and test the correctness of these ideas in such action.

This process was to be repeated continually, leading to ever more correct and effective policies. In practice, cadres might use mass line techniques for a variety of ends: to resolve local disputes, investigate local conditions and concerns, or solicit adjustments to party policies as they were imposed.

Today, many Maoist groups consider the mass line a distinguishing feature of Maoism, and argue that it distinguishes the Maoist tradition from the stark authoritarianism of many Stalinist parties. However, the mass line concept admits a wide range of applications, precisely because it leaves unspecified how cadres are to grapple with mass ideas after having solicited them. In texts and speeches, Mao proposed that cadres should process ideas like a "factory," but the details remained vague: cadres were simply to distinguish "correct" ideas from "incorrect" ones. This ambiguity invites a variety of empiricist interpretations, which, as we will see below, are a prominent feature of Mao's philosophy. Rather than analyzing mass ideas as interpretations of a contradictory reality, whose internal contradictions must themselves be unpacked and examined, the mass line can easily be applied by simply judging mass ideas right or wrong based on a preexisting standard. Thus the concept can be reduced to a populist method of manufacturing consent. Nonetheless, the mass line and other work methods allowed the party to plant organizational roots in the Chinese peasantry throughout the 1930s and 1940s.

In addition to its work methods, the CCP leadership also began to develop its own distinctive theories and strategies, distinct from those inherited from the Comintern. The Yan'an period saw Mao develop his military theory, with pieces such as On Guerilla Warfare, Problems of Strategy in China's Rev-

8. The New Democratic Revolution

In The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party and On New Democracy, Mao proposes a conception of revolution in semi-colonial countries, which combines elements of Stalin's formulations in the 1920s with new distinct features. Just as Mao believed the party could use the united front to ally with bourgeois elements while gaining a leading role in the struggle, his theory of "New Democracy" proposes to do the same thing on a national scale through the state apparatus. Mao argues that the party can carry out a revolution in alliance bourgeois classes, use those classes to develop the country economically after seizing power, and ultimately expropriate them to establish a socialist society.

In The Chinese Revolution, Mao argues that the Chinese revolution primarily aims to overthrow imperialism and feudalism, "by means of a national and democratic revolution in which the bourgeoisie sometimes takes part." Because the revolution is "not against capitalism and capitalist private property" per se, the Chinese revolution will inevitably take on a "bourgeois-democratic" character at first: a "degree of capitalist development will be an inevitable result of the victory of the democratic revolution." However, in On New Democracy Mao argues that this "democratic revolution" will not be like the bourgeois revolutions of eras past. It will be "no longer democracy in general, but democracy of…a new and special type, namely, New Democracy."

on land reform, and continued to support land seizures, until they were criticized and purged as "leftists" and "Trotskyites" between 1936 and 1938. In their place was erected a moderate land reform line, which contrasted with Mao's writings Mao's writings in Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan, but paralleled the earlier land reform policies of the Chinese Soviet Republic in Kiangsi.

Mao's formulation of the united front improved living conditions and avoided subjugating the party to the KMT, but did so at the cost of positioning the party itself as a mediating force that increasingly dominated over the proletariat and peasantry, as it had over women. While safeguarding CCP control over its army and territories, Mao agreed to subjugate class struggle in those territories to bourgeois interests, with the party acting as their enforcer. He thus guaranteed "independence and initiative" not to the proletariat and the peasantry, but to a party claiming to represent them. This arrangement helped solidify the CCP as a body with its own interests distinct from those of the exploited and oppressed, even as the peasantry grew entwined with the party through its mass organizations. This orientation would continue through the end of the war. Even after clashes between the CCP and KMT intensified in 1940 and the Second United Front collapsed, the party still maintained its moderate line, in order to curry favor with the national bourgeoisie in accordance with Mao's theory of "New Democracy."

olutionary War, Basic Tactics, Problems of Guerilla Strategy in War Against Japanand On Protracted War. In 1937, Mao published On Practiceand On Contradiction, his defining statements on philosophy, as well as a body of lecture notes on dialectics for internal party use. Mao also developed his first complete statements on the strategy of the Chinese revolution. These efforts began with his formulation of the "united front" concept in the late 1930s, and culminated with the publication of The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party in December 1939, and On New Democracy in January 1940.

7. The United Front

The concepts of the united front and the New Democratic revolution served as theoretical guideposts for the CCP. The term "united front" has a long history in the communist tradition, starting with the Russian revolution and continuing through most strands of Leninism and Trotskyism. A united front is a tactic, whereby a revolutionary party forms an alliance with reformist organizations in order to connect with their working class base, and by waging common struggles with them, gain influence and leadership in the working class movement. The tactic was formalized and spread by the Comintern beginning in 1921. By the late 1930s the Comintern had expanded the notion to include alliances with bourgeois political parties, in a "Popular Front" against fascism designed to defend the USSR from rising fascist powers in Europe.

Mao formulated his own version of the united front in the late 1930s, as the CCP navigated its relationship with the KMT. In line with Stalin's "Popular Front" strategy, Mao argued that an alliance was necessary not only between workers and peasants, but also with progressive sections of the bourgeoisie, in order to guarantee China's national liberation from Japan. Yet in contrast to some applications of the "Popular Front", Mao insisted the party retain its own independent initiative, and gain leadership over the struggle as a whole. For him this leadership was mainly militarily: Mao refused KMT demands to reduce the numbers of the Red Army, admit KMT deputies into Red Army ranks, or submit the Red Army to a general command. But given these conditions, Mao was willing to accept the costs of an alliance. To keep the KMT and other bourgeois

forces committed to the nationalist struggle, the CCP would have to ingratiate itself to the KMT's class base. This required limiting class struggle in CCP base areas, and looking out for the interests of the national bourgeoisie.

In The Question of Independence and Initiative within the United Front, published in November 1938, Mao proposes that all classes in CCP-controlled territories must make "mutual concessions" in the interest of fighting the Japanese. For the time being, the party must "subordinate the class struggle to the present national struggle against Japan". Factory workers may "demand better conditions from the owners," but must also "work hard in the interests of resistance." While "landlords should reduce rent and interest…at the same time the peasants should pay rent and interest." Current Problems of Tactics in the Anti-Japanese United Front, published in March 1940, further details how the party will gain the support of the national bourgeoisie, the nationalist "enlightened gentry", and regional power brokers in conflict with Chiang Kai-shek. Winning them over, Mao notes, will require the CCP to "respect their interests" while demonstrating the Red Army's military abilities. The same year, Mao also moved to integrate ruling class sectors into the governments in the base areas, apportioning seats in governing bodies "one-third for Communists, one-third for non-Party left progressives, and one-third for the intermediate sections who are neither left nor right".

Guided by Mao's framework, the party limited itself to a "minimum program" of land reform rather than agrarian revolution. It sanctioned the seizure of comprador property in its base areas, often belonging to "traitors" who had fled the area. But it prevented poor peasants from seizing the land of "patriotic" middle and rich peasants, industrialists or merchants. To soften the remaining inequalities, the party then implemented progressive taxes, reduced rents by around 25%, and capped interest at a maximum of 15% per year. Many of the poor peasants who made up the CCP's rank and file opposed this clampdown

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number rose to 20 million, and by 1958 officials claimed 59 million workdays had been carried out.

Production boomed, prompting elation from CCP leaders, and initiating a vicious cycle of rising expectations. In 1958, rural cadres began to overestimate the yields that their mass production campaigns would produce. Each level of the CCP bureaucracy, keen to prove its enthusiasm about the campaign to its superiors, tended to inflate statistics on their way to Beijing. With these skewed numbers, party leaders then set production goals even higher, necessitating further exploitation at the base and generating more false claims that these goals had been met. Many cadres were afraid to revise production targets downward so soon after the Anti-Rightist campaign, for fear of being labeled "rightist", and potentially purged, imprisoned or executed. The ensuing cycle of soaring expectations and deepening exploitation became known as the "exaggeration wind". In 1958, the state doubled its steel quotas from the previous year, and targets continued to rise over the following months as Mao emphasized the importance of steel production in public statements. In some Yunnan province, some local officials claimed a new factory was opened every 1.05 minutes, while officials in Jingning county in Gansu province reported that more than ten thousand factories had been built in fifteen days.

Party leaders believed the Chinese economy was making a dramatic leap from semi-colonial underdevelopment to communist abundance in a short period of time. In July 1958, Liu Shao-qi boasted that China would overtake the U.K.'s industrial capacity in two to three years. In August 1958, Mao predicted China would surpass socialism and reach communism in three to four, or possibly five to six, years. The People's Daily and other party publications regularly spoke of the China making a transition to a communism, where society would be guided by the principle "from each according to ability, to each according to need". Communes overestimated the national food sur-

plus based on inflated statistics, and communal kitchens soon allowed people to eat for free, prompting a consumption boom in late 1958. For a brief window, peasant work hours spiked in tandem with consumption. But the boom couldn't last.

15. The Great Famine

Food supplies began to drop in 1959, and peasants soon reached their physical limits. A December 1958 party directive had instructed cadres to curb peasant "enthusiasm" and remind people to sleep eight hours per night. Now starvation began to hit the provinces. In Qiaogou Commune in Huaibin County, 26.7% of members one work brigade eventually died from starvation, as compared with only 8.8% of cadres. Xinyang prefecture in Henan experienced some of the most acute famine deaths, with one out of eight residents—about 1 million people—dying of starvation. In the most extreme cases, residents resorted to eating tree bark and agricultural waste, or engaging in cannibalism.

At a CCP conference in Lushan in July 1959, many party leaders called for an end to the GLF in the face of the growing crisis. Defense Minister Peng Te-Huai led the charge by criticizing Mao in an open letter. Mao made a brief self-criticism before the party, but soon doubled back, and attacked Peng and his supporters for "right deviationism." Peng was removed, and Lin Biao, one of Mao's close allies, was installed in his place as head of the army. A campaign against right deviationism was then executed throughout the party over the following months, purging critics of the GLF, and pushing the campaign ahead even as famines deepened. The situation was then worsened by a series of natural disasters: in July 1959 the Yellow River flooded croplands, and in 1960 droughts affected around half of China's agricultural areas. (Notably, however, the flood cycle in 1959 was less pronounced than in 1954 or 1973, and drought conditions in 1960 were less severe than cyclical droughts in

1955, 1963 and 1966. Natural calamities contributed to famines during the GLF, but were not their main cause.)

Well into 1960, state procurement of grain continued to rise based on exaggerated numbers, even as agricultural production plummeted and the peasantry neared exhaustion. State grain supplies were directed toward the cities and exports: while grain output fell in China by 25 million tons between 1957 and 1959, exports doubled in the same period to 4.2 million tons, and sales of grain to the cities remained higher per capita than the countryside. When state grain procurement was finally forced down in 1960-61 due to a growing production crisis, the state nonetheless reduced grain sales to the countryside by 8 billion kilos, and more than doubled its exports. In 1960, the USSR withdrew its technical advisors from China amid growing Sino-Soviet tensions. While most of the advisors were related to China's nascent nuclear weapons program, a handful was related to agriculture. Nonetheless, Mao pushed forward. In March 1960, Mao lauded the communes in Guizhou province, claiming they would "make a great leap forward in the transition from socialism to communism in the next five to ten years." Guizhou eventually suffered the most reported starvation deaths per capita of all Chinese provinces, with about 5.3% of its 17 million residents dying.

Soon peasants began to rebel, straining the hegemony of the CCP in the countryside. Multiple provinces reported spikes in looting and theft in 1960, particularly of grain depots and train shipments of food. In the winter of 1960-1961, Liping county in Guizhou saw over 4,000 lootings of state storehouses. Other peasants fled their homes: around 60,000 refugees flooded from the southwest provinces into Hong Kong from 1960-61. With their base disintegrating, rural cadres were increasingly forced to disband commune organizations, and send peasants back to household plots to organize their own subsistence. The party soon chose to retreat from the GLF, rather than risk mass repression of its peasant base. At a party conference in 1961, Mao

by which we judge the changes wrought by mass movements and ruptures.

Today's revolutionary movements must prepare for the challenges that follow on the heels every revolutionary rupture. As has been the case in every modern revolution, a new society in emergence will be forced to defend itself from internal enemies among the overthrown classes, external enemies and hostile states, and from the ideological detritus of capitalist society. However, the methods used to address these problems must not contribute to the reproduction of class relations. They must rather actively undermine class relations, and defend and deepen the communist social relations struggling to reproduce themselves on expanded scales. To the extent that capitalist relations of production still exist in a given context, the presence of a specialized repressive apparatus is a sufficient condition for their reproduction. Revolutionaries must therefore oppose the development of any armed body that may be directed to reproduce exploitation, and instead encourage forms of mass, federated, armed organization capable of acting in concert as well as autonomously. There is no alternative to the anarchist thesis: the state must be smashed.

This path offers as many questions as it does answers. The revolutions that burned brightly throughout human history now illuminate the contours of a possible future society. By critically evaluating these experiences, we can identify the dead ends that each uncovered in practice, and guess at the possibilities that await us in the darkness ahead. This task is replete with ambiguities and questions. If we are to avoid duplicating the needless sacrifices of the 20th century—those of Maoism included—we have no choice but to pursue this task.

made a more profound self-criticism than two years earlier. Premier Zhou En-Lai drafted "Twelve Agricultural Provisions" that encouraged peasants to cultivate private plots of land, and allowed them to establish local markets for their produce. The communal kitchens were disbanded, and "people's communes" were preserved in name only.

The human cost of the GLF was enormous. Estimates range from 18 to 45 million dead, with 35 million the most likely number according to three different studies. Proportional to the population, the GLF thus had roughly the same human cost as Stalin's collectivization. For this price paid in corpses, the GLF accomplished a burst in agricultural and industrial production that could not be sustained in the long term. Heavy industry did leap 230% between 1958 and 1960, and steel output grew from 5.35 million tons in 1957, to 18 million tons in 1960. But many of the materials and industrial projects produced during the leap were of low quality, and had to be scrapped afterward. The CCP's second Five Year Plan, introduced after the GLF, saw 100,000 enterprises closed, steel production drop back to 7 million tons, and labor productivity fall by 5.4 percent. Agricultural production plummeted below 1952 levels, and wouldn't recoveruntil the late 1960s. 16 million people had to be sent back to their hokou assignments in the countryside over the following years, having fled to the cities during the famine.

The disaster of the GLF was a structural requirement of "socialism in one country." To raise living standards in an isolated and underdeveloped nation, the CCP had no option but to rely on internal exploitation of the country's non-capitalist classes. At the same time, the particular form this exploitation took in China resulted from the party's deep embeddedness in the countryside. The CCP was intimately connected with the peasantry going back to the Yan'an period, allowing it to mediate and limit the peasantry's class interests through an extensive rural organizational apparatus. With this system in place, the party could carry out the GLF through mass mobilization, and

only face resistance and the question of armed force once starvation was well underway.

The end of the GLF was a major blow to Mao's prestige. Not only had the campaign pushed the party's hegemony in the countryside to its limits and resulted in mass deaths, but the effort had disappointed according to developmentalist standards. Deep fissures now appeared in the party leadership over how to address the party's failures. For the first since the 1930s, Mao's wing of the party found itself removed from positions of influence. In 1959, Mao was ousted as State Chairman, and replaced by Liu Shao-qi. In 1962, party officials who had been purged for critiquing the GLF were rehabilitated, and a party conference denounced the "cult of personality" surrounding Mao. Led by Liu Shao-qi, the party's "pragmatic" wing took control of the state. Yet Mao continued to search for a Chinese path distinct from that of the USSR while out of the public eye. He would develop new ideas during the Sino-Soviet split.

the established left, and is not reducible to any one revolutionary organization. Revolutionaries must develop a praxis that allows them to contribute to mass struggles the ideas, methods and historical lessons they carry, while seeking out, highlighting and building upon the self-activity that the oppressed and exploited themselves display, and which alone prefigures the new society.

Today's revolutionary movements may find themselves waging struggles with the sanction of sympathetic leaders in positions of state power, whether socialist, nationalist or otherwise. Such situations are unavoidable, and taking advantage of them is strategically necessary. However, revolutionaries must always clearly identify to mass organizations their class allies and class enemies, while developing their capacity to operate autonomously from state power, defending this capacity, and preparing them for the overthrow of the state itself. To fail in this task is to stunt the development of independent theory and organization among mass movements, and guarantee they will be unprepared when their "friends" in state power turn on them. This lesson is of particular salience to revolutionaries working under new left-wing governments in Latin America, such as Uruguay, Chile, Brazil, Bolivia and Venezuela.

Today as in the past, a revolutionary movement must pursue a world in which everyone enjoys control over the means of production. However, this society cannot be brought about simply by transferring juridical ownership of capitalist enterprises to a ruling party or state, which then purports to represent the proletariat through a correct political line. Such arrangements preserve capitalist relations of exploitation, thus generating daily and hourly the capitalist value and social power used to stranglerevolutionary social transformation itself. A revolution can only be affected by a far-reaching transformation the social relationships through which masses of people produce and reproduce human life, day after day. This must be the goal at which revolutionaries aim, and the standard

embedded in a set of revolutionary politics far different from those developed by Mao from the 1920s to the 1970s. A revolutionary movement today must pursue revolution on a world scale, over and above the consolidation of a new social system in any individual state. The spread of global production chains makes any attempt to create a revolutionary society within the bounds of a single state increasingly incoherent. Submerged in a capitalist world market, and intimately reliant on commodity production from all corners of the globe, no state will be able to develop a qualitatively new society within its borders alone. Thedisastrous experience of "socialism in one country" demonstrates that a global revolutionary transformation can only unfold starting from a large world region, and encompassing some portion of advanced capitalist production. Today's revolutionaries must certainly work to maintain and expand rebel territories that allow for revolutionary activity, on whatever scale. But we must also cast aside the illusion of building "socialism" within these enclaves, and maintain unwavering and critical analysis of the relations of production and reproduction operating within them. Our strategy must begin on the level of trade blocs and hemispheres.

A revolutionary organization today must develop work methods that recognize, grapple with, support and galvanize the self-activity of the proletariat. This requires analyzing mass consciousness as a contradictory interpretation of reality with real effects and potentials, from which revolutionaries stand to learn even as they contribute to it. This perspective stands fundamentally opposed to party substitutionism and Stalinist philosophy. While revolutionary groups draw upon the history of class struggle, and employ specialized methods in the course of their work, they are but one arena in which the experience, lessons, and consciousness of the oppressed and exploited are crystallized and sustained. The potential for revolutionary consciousness is carried in "good sense," traditional community organizations, subcultures and autonomous movements outside

16. The Sino-Soviet Split and the Critique of Stalinism: 1960-1963

As the party retreated from the GLF, a full diplomatic break between China and the Soviet Union emerged in the international arena. The "Sino-Soviet split" was expressed geopolitically through a breakdown in political and military relations between the two nations and their allies. It was also ideologically in repeated polemics written between the CCP and the CPSU.

Geopolitically, the CCP grew disenchanted with the USSR as it became clear the Soviets were acting out of narrow self-interest as an imperialist state. At the 20th Congress of the CPSU, Khrushchev established a policy of "peaceful coexistence" with the West, and three years later met with Eisenhower to defuse Cold War tensions—two moves regarded as heresy by the CCP leadership. In 1959, the USSR began pulling its nuclear advisors out of China, delaying China's first test of nuclear weapons for several years. In 1962, the USSR then refused to side with China during a brief Sino-Indian war sparked over a border conflict in Tibet, even as it engaged in its own nuclear brinksmanship in Cuba. Finally in 1963, Khrushchev signed the Limited Test Ban Treaty with the U.S. and Britain, opposing new entrants into the "nuclear club" just as China's own weapons program was nearing its first bomb test.

These developments demonstrated to Mao and the CCP that the Soviets were looking out for their own interests as a su-

perpower, not for the world socialist movement. Thus Mao increasingly began to refer to the USSR as a "social imperialist" state in speeches and writings. The geopolitical split was elaborated ideologically in a series of documents authored by Mao and the CCP leadership, which broke with Soviet orthodoxy. The texts hammered out a new conception of the revolutionary process: socialism, Mao concluded, is an extended transitional phase, whose outcome is not assured, and in which social conflicts must be addressed by ongoing mass campaigns in order to avoid capitalist restoration.

The CCP had already published On the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, and More on the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat in 1957. The documents criticized the CPSU's rigid application of Marxist doctrine, and offered their own synthesis of Stalinist theory. They argued that contradictions continue to exist in socialist societies, as implied by Mao's speech "On the Ten Major Relationships". At the same time, they affirmed "socialism in one country" as a universal model: the goal for communist movements worldwide was to forge an alliance between the working class and the peasantry, lead a revolution and seize power through a Marxist-Leninist party, nationalize industry, and gradually raise the productive forces of the country while opposing imperialism internationally. The documents also offered a non-Khrushchevite balance sheet of Stalin's legacy, criticizing the cult of personality and Stalin's foreign policy, but viewing him positively overall. A common formulation used by Mao was that Stalin was "30% wrong and 70% right".

These formulations rebuked the most obviously revisionist aspects of Stalinist orthodoxy, but at the same time, retained its commitment to building the kind of society that would necessitate a ruling class ideology akin to Stalinism. Mao and other CCP leaders eventually published a collection of polemics against the CPSU in 1963, under the title The Polemic on the General Line of the International Communist Move-

discussion. In contrast with most other conceptions of revolutionary democracy, Mao's concept implies that some perspectives within a given organization must not only be incorrect or incomplete, but reactionary. Maoist militants thus often read crypto-revisionism into each other's arguments, and denounce each other's positions as a "bourgeois line." To avoid these sectarian outcomes, revolutionaries today must abandon the two-line struggle concept as an approach to internal debates. It might still be fruitfully applied, however, as a means to analyze debates occurring in formerly revolutionary groups that find themselves in command of unions, nonprofits, or political parties.

Politics in command: Mao instructed party cadres to put "politics in command" when engaging with workers, overriding their narrow sectional interests in the broader interest of revolution. This conception is beneficial inasmuch as it challenges revolutionaries to avoid "tailing" white supremacist, patriarchal or homophobic groups of workers. However, the concept may equally be used to legitimate an organization'sdominance over the proletariat. Mao used the concept during the Cultural Revolution to denigrate "economistic" workers, while affirming the authority of the CCP's political lineover worker struggles. In this way, "politics in command" threatens to duplicate the authoritarian aspects of Lenin's What Is To Be Done?, substituting party authority in place of a method that can draw upon with the contradictory content of worker consciousness, demands and struggles. Revolutionaries today must refuse the reactionary aspects of "politics in command," and develop a praxis that grasps the revolutionary horizons present within the proletariat's own contradictory thoughts and actions.

For revolutionaries who aim at a free anarchist and communist society, Maoism as a whole must be rejected. It may be possible to extract particular strategic concepts, work methods, or slogans from the Chinese experience, after subjecting it to a rigorous critique. However, these elements must then be

members of deposed classes, or handfuls of corrupt officials). It does not aim to transform the relations of production or smash the state, because it assumes these tasks have already been largely accomplished. It presupposes that party rule is the sole guarantor of continued socialist development, rather than a measure of the proletariat's failure to govern itself. Thus, it assumes party rule must be defended even while engaging in "class struggle". This perspective is useless to revolutionaries who wish to learn from the tragedies of the 20th century.

If "class struggle under socialism" means simply that social conflicts continue after a revolution, including struggles against deposed ruling groups and prejudices or inequalities, then it merely recapitulates a well-accepted platitude, while ignoring the problem of the class relations generated by state socialist regimes throughout history. If, on the contrary, the concept proposes to address the existence of classes in what have been called socialist societies, then it does so while denying the existence of these very classes, and offering no tools to analyze the basis of their reproduction. The concept of "class struggle under socialism," a central part of the Maoist conception of socialist transition, must be jettisoned by today's revolutionaries as an incoherent and unhelpful formulation. In its place, revolutionaries can employ the concept of class struggle itself.

Two-line struggle: Mao developed the notion of "two line struggle" to explain how bourgeois interests were being expressed within the CCP. Yet the Maoist tradition refuses to recognize that this phenomenon was ultimately a result of the party's position at the head of a capitalist society. As a result, the tradition has little idea what causes bourgeois politics to emerge in a given group, believing it to be a universal phenomenon in all revolutionary organizations, of whatever size, in whatever relation to the state. This slippage casts all internal debates in revolutionary groups as a battle between fundamentally opposed class positions, and tends to degrade democratic

ment. In articles such as "On The Question of Stalin" and "On Khrushchev's Phony Communism and Its Historical Lessons for the World," the CCP reaffirmed its criticisms of the USSR. At the same time, Mao continued his introspection on the Soviet model in his own writings. In 1961-1962, Mao compiled an extensive set of "Reading Notes on the Soviet Text Political Economy," and synthesized his conclusions in several public articles. Mao's "Reading Notes" include detailed critiques of Soviet economic, industrial and agricultural policy, as well as larger strategic questions over the nature of socialist transition. They shed light on Mao's evolving critique of the Soviet Union in the early 1960s.

In his "Reading Notes," Mao first criticizes the Soviets for denying the "universal significance" of state capitalism as a developmental method for semi-colonial countries. He then argues against using "material incentives" to spur production, such as piece-work and production bonuses, and instead insists that parties should put "politics in command," increasing production by convincing workers of a political line that requires higher productivity to achieve its goals. Only when "politics is weakened" is there "no choice but to talk about material incentive." Mao admits that continued wage labor under state capitalism will generate "value" in the capitalist sense, but insists that this value can be used "as an instrument of planning" without constituting "the main basis of planning." At the same time, however, he admits that "only if increases and the percentages of accumulation go up a bit can people's livelihoods be finally improved." Therefore the party must "practice economies and…accumulate large amounts of materials and wealth."

Focusing in on the transition from socialism to communism, Mao refuses the Soviet notion that socialism comprises a "fully consolidated" mode of production. He instead interprets socialism an extended transitional phase, in which communist and capitalist social relations vie for dominance. "Contradictions are the motive forces" of changes in socialist society, Mao in-

sists, while "criticism and self-criticism are the methods for resolving" them. Although "the transition to communism certainly is not a matter of one class overthrowing another" since classes have ceased to exist in the realm of production, "there are bound to be certain problems with 'vested interest groups' which have grown content with existing institutions." Criticism and self-criticism must therefore be employed, to accomplish a "social revolution in which new production relations and social institutions supersede old ones" in a peaceful manner.

This formulation in turn forces Mao to address where contradictions in socialist society come from, if not from class relations. At first, Mao admits that "contradictions to be resolved remain in the production relations under people's ownership." However, he fails to describe what these contradictions consist of. At various points he mentions "vested interest groups" who resist social transformation, or "'master-of-the-house' attitudes" that "make the workers reluctant to observe labor discipline". Nowhere, however, does Mao consider the idea that exploitation and alienated labor under state socialism may comprise a class relation in itself. Instead, Mao simply describes bad attitudes that stoke conflict at the point of production—that is, symptoms of class relations. In other cases, he blames social conflicts on the clash between "collective ownership" relations in cooperatives and "ownership by the whole people" in nationalized industries, rather than interrogating production relations in the nationalized sector itself.

In his "Reading Notes," Mao elaborates the bedrock of contemporary Maoist conceptions of socialist transition. He conceives of socialism as an extended transitional period, operating on the basis of a state capitalist economy, but directed by ideological commitment rather than profit motives. He believes the transition period will involve a continual "revolution" in the relations of production, but without class conflict per se. Social contradictions will continue to exist under socialism—

standing of consciousness, viewing it as an internally contradictory interpretation of a contradictory social reality. This latter approach—present in the writings of Marxists from Gramsci to C.L.R. James—must be added to any application of the mass line, in order to avoid its Stalinist pitfalls.

Different types of contradictions: Mao's distinctions between primary and secondary contradictions, and between antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions, have been usefully applied by many militants in analyzing relationships between classes or movements in a given political terrain. Huey P. Newton, for example, employed the concept to advocate for a "non-antagonistic" relationship with the women's liberation and gay liberation movements in 1970.198 As tools to help revolutionaries conceptualize the different kinds of relationships possible between classes and power blocs, or the differing importance of various social conflicts, Mao's categories may be similarly useful to revolutionaries today. Nonetheless, little in these concepts need be considered "dialectical" in the philosophical sense of the term. As "dialectics," they lack an understanding of the necessary self-movement of contradictions, and the negation of one term of a contradiction by another. Rather than taking Mao's terms as philosophical concepts, they might more fruitfully compared, contrasted and combined with elements of military strategy, political science or game theory.

Class struggle under socialism: The notion of "class struggle under socialism" is beset by the problems of Mao's thinking in the 1950s and 1960s. At first glance, the concept boldly asserts that "class struggle" continues under state socialist regimes. Yet at the same time, it refuses to recognize state socialist regimes as class societies built upon exploitative class relations, and it considers party rule under state socialism synonymous with a "dictatorship" of the proletariat itself. As a result, "class struggle under socialism" in the Maoist tradition merely refers to an ongoing struggle after a state socialist revolution, against leftover reactionary ideas and particular groups of people (such as

ism. From this perspective, it is no longer possible to be a Marxist without being a Maoist. Such an application of Mao's philosophy imposes abstract schemas on the complexity and contingency of human history and social practice, and tends toward dogmatism. This tendency cannot be fully overcome without abandoning Mao's conception of consciousness, and the relation of the dialectic to mental, social, and physical phenomena.

Prolonged people's war: Mao's military strategies have not been discussed in this piece. However, it is worth reaffirming that any application of military theory must take place through grappling with the concrete conditions at hand. Today many Maoist groups assert that, as with other aspects of Maoist dogma, "prolonged people's war" is a universally applicable method through which revolutionary struggles must be waged, in advanced capitalist countries as well as underdeveloped ones. This approach duplicates the positivism of Stalinist philosophy, and flies in the face of Mao's own investigations in pieces such as Why Is it that Red Political Power Can Exist in China?. By reifying one historically specific form of politico-military strategy, this approach can only deepen the uneven historical experience of the Maoist tradition, so well versed in rural guerrilla warfare, and so inexperienced in urban worker struggles.

Mass line: As a general approach to engaging masses of people, soliciting ideas and offering them in turn, the mass line is laudable. Though the concept was sometimes used as a way to impose a political line from above, it fundamentally aims to allow a mass base of workers to pose problems, questions and ideas to a revolutionary organization. However, the concept fails to describe how revolutionaries should "concentrate" proletarian ideas once they have been collected. Here the mass line concept falls back on a fundamentally empiricist practice, instructing revolutionaries to simply judge mass ideas "correct" or "incorrect," and bring to the masses a "correct" line. Revolutionaries today must make use of a more nuanced under-

whether due to bad work habits by cadres and workers, the opportunism of vested interests groups, or conflicts between the nationalized sectors of the economy and other forms of production. However, these problems can be resolved through a broad application of criticism and self-criticism in work methods and mass mobilizations. This formulation would lead Mao into the crucible of the Cultural Revolution.

17. An Explosion Waiting to Happen

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Mao embraced a new problematic: how to ameliorate the effects of Stalinism, while still maintaining its underlying assumptions? He declared openly that social contradictions existed in state socialist societies, and proposed that these conflicts would determine the trajectory of socialist transition, thus breaking with Soviet orthodoxy. At the same time, like Stalin, he clung to state capitalism as a developmental model, the plausibility—indeed, the goal—of "socialism in one country," and the belief that the party is always the transparent representative of the proletariat. Mao reconciled these seemingly contradictory positions by seeking the source of social contradictions under state socialism in every location except the relations of production. Not alienated labor, money, the law of value, or capital accumulation were to blame, but rather sociological interest groups from former deposed classes, small-scale production at the margins of the economy, and "bad ideas" floating around in mass culture. To maintain his Stalinist commitments, Mao had to willfully abandon Marx's critical focus on social relations of production.

Despite these shortcomings, Mao's reconception of socialist transition did lead him to question the nature of the Chinese state. By the early 1960s Mao had grown convinced that the contradictions in Chinese society might cause the party to lapse into revisionism, as he believed the CPSU had done under Khrushchev. Slowly Mao worked his way into a vexed theoretical position: "class struggle" continued to exist under Chinese

strategy is constructed are even applicable to contemporary conditions. In the first place, the Soviet Union no longer exists, thus denying the theory of "New Democracy" the world-historic force it believed enabled the transition from a "bourgeois democratic" revolution to socialism. But more importantly, the very notion that a national bourgeoisie will side with a nationalist struggle, and develop the nation's economy before being replaced, presupposes that national bourgeoisies will behave today in the same manner they were said to behave in the 1920s by Stalin and the Comintern.

Today the configuration of finance capital, monopoly trusts, global production chains, and state military power is dramatically different from the exclusionary colonial empires of the early 20th century. Former colonial zones are now formally independent, with access to a far more integrated global financial market than the protectionist imperialist blocs of a century ago. Under these conditions, the bourgeoisies of underdeveloped countries are more inclined to affiliate as "junior partners" in a global production regime—as those of the Asian "tigers," India, Brazil, and many others have done—than to pursue a program of protectionist state development. A "national bourgeoisie" of the sort presupposed by Mao, sympathetic to nationalist struggles led by socialist forces, may no longer exist.

Dialectics: Philosophically, the same reductive materialism and empiricism present in the Stalinist tradition is at least partially duplicated in Maoist philosophy. This feature need not lead to the exact same outcomes as it did in the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, one can identify these elements at work in contemporary Maoist groups. For example, many Maoist groups claim that Maoism represents an advance in the "objective science" of Marxism. If the dialectic is a law of physical matter, then every revolutionary theory "tested" and "proven" in practice constitutes an objective and irrefutable advance in scientific knowledge: just as Newtonian physics subsumed its predecessors, so Maoism constitutes an absolute advance of Marx-

been applied in a variety of different ways and contexts within the Maoist tradition itself. Below is a brief "balance sheet" of some of the central concepts of Mao's thought.

United Front: Mao conceives of the united front as an alliance with progressive sections of the bourgeoisie. While the terms of the united front are enforced by the party upon its base, the party nonetheless retains its own organizational autonomy, and takes a leading role in the alliance itself. Mao's is just one of many united front concepts in the communist tradition, all of which provide a wealth of frameworks to conceive ofalliances with different class forces. However, Mao's conception leaves unanswered two vital questions: First, what kind of temporary alliances are possible with classes whose interests are not only different from those of the proletariat, but are based on a relationship of exploitation with it? Second, what are the costs and benefits of enforcing the terms of a tactical alliance, struck by a revolutionary organization, on that organization's class base?

For Mao, both questions were foregone conclusions, because he viewed the party as the representative of the proletariat's ultimate interests, which could thus enter into all manner of alliances, and constrain class struggle, without error. These positions guaranteed victory over Japan and later the KMT, but also compelled the party to contain agrarian revolution in its own territories, and turn itself into a force dominating over the classes it purported to represent. Today's revolutionaries cannot afford to make the same mistakes.

New Democracy: The notion of "New Democracy" presupposes an effort to win state power in an underdeveloped context, and gradually supplant the national bourgeoisie at the head of a state capitalist economy. This strategy has been proven disastrous, by inevitably generating a "red bourgeoisie" from the exploitative relations of production it seeks to implement. On this basis alone, New Democracy must be rejected. Yet it's also unclear whether the categories upon which the

socialism, but this was not primarily due to the existence of classes. China was not a class society: its economic base was now essentially "socialist" in nature, despite a few vaguely-defined "imperfections". Instead, class struggle was expressed as a "two-line struggle" of ideas, which took place within the party itself. On one side was a political line that would continue China on the path to communism, and on the other was a political line that would lead toward capitalist restoration. Production relations could be continually reformed in order to deepen socialism, and prevent social divisions from taking root. But a struggle in the political sphere was required in order to guarantee these reforms success. "If Marxist-Leninists are in control" of society, Mao posited in his Reading Notes, "the rights of the vast majority will be guaranteed." But "if rightists or right opportunists are in control, these organs and enterprises [i.e. the state and production] may change qualitatively."

Mao had come to believe the character of Chinese society, socialist or capitalist, would be decided by what political line held sway in state power. His first attempt to put this perspective into practice came in 1963, with the Socialist Education Movement. The mobilization sent students and intellectuals to the countryside to labor alongside peasants, and encouraged workers and peasants to critique party bureaucratism. Carried out through the party apparatus, however, the effort was quickly blunted. Liu Shao-qi revised Mao's initial mandate for the mobilization, narrowing its scope and giving party "work teams" tight control over mass activity. From his position of decreased influence, Mao seemed incapable of halting a slow slide into capitalist "restoration." Thus he launched a mass campaign in the late 1960s that would shake Chinese society to its foundations: the Cultural Revolution.

IV.THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION

27. What Is Useful in Mao's Politics Today?

Given this history, what use can revolutionaries make of Maoist politics today? A full assessment of how Mao's ideas have been taken up outside China is beyond the scope of this piece. An anarchist communist analysis of the New Communist Movement in the U.S, the Shining Path in Peru, the Naxalites in India, the CPN-M in Nepal, the TKP/M-L in Turkey, and the Communist Party of the Philippines—not to mention the scattered Maoist groupings that dot Europe and North America today—must be written by other militants. Nonetheless, here too it's possible to offer a few preliminary assessments.

When one applies a critical understanding of the Chinese experience to Mao's politics, his ideas are cast in a new light. "Maoism" now appears unable to address its own tendency toward authoritarian state capitalism, such that it ceases to provide a unitary body of revolutionary theory and practice to those of us who desire a free world. What remains is an assortment of strategies and work methods, each of which, taken in isolation, possesses its own strengths, weaknesses and blind spots, and each of which may be evaluated in turn. Some of Mao's formulations so clearly presuppose a Stalinist model that they are of little use to us today. For concepts such as "New Democracy" to have any meaning in practice, for example, they require us to assume a set of conditions and strategic priorities that are antithetical to the goal of a free anarchist and communist society. Other concepts are more innocuous, as they have

Mao's Stalinist critique of Stalinism wallowed in incoherence, and could only lead to a handover of power to the more openly capitalist wing of the party. Just as Khrushchev's policies represented a fundamental continuation of Stalin's class politics in a more self-aware form, so the capitalist reforms of Deng Xiaopeng represented a fundamental continuation of Mao's.

The Cultural Revolution (CR) was initiated by Mao and his wing of the CCP, in part to oust bureaucratic opponents and return themselves to power, but also as an earnest attempt to prevent what they saw as the creeping bureaucratization of the Chinese state, which would lead toward capitalist restoration. Mao's wing of the party understood this process in the manner formulated by Mao's writings throughout the late 1950s: an aspect of the continuing class struggle under socialism, which was caused by leftover bad ideas in the superstructure of society that aggravated vaguely-defined "imperfections" in its socialist economic base. Mao crafted the CR as a mass mobilization that, unlike the Socialist Education Movement, would circumvent much of the established CCP leadership.

But while Mao's wing of the party only intended a cultural revolution to address these problems, they unwittingly stumbled upon another reality: the explosive class contradictions generated by exploitation under state capitalism. Resentment at the suffering of the GLF, exploitation in the workplace, and the authoritarianism and privileges of party cadres, exploded in mass activity. Through an extended process of factionalization, cooptation and conflict with the party, these movements gradually developed their own autonomous perspectives on the situation in China, and in some cases, on the need for a new revolution. CR groups threatened to break outside the bounds imposed by Mao's leadership, and posed challenges to the Chinese social and economic order. They brought the country to the brink of civil war.

At the height of the unrest, Mao was forced to crush the very movement he had brought into being, just as he had a decade prior. For several years afterward, Mao's wing of the party continued advocating CR mobilizations amid diminishing popular enthusiasm. But Mao's death in 1976 created an opening for the "pragmatic" wing of the CCP to once again take control of the state, and lead China toward the authoritarian capitalist system we see today. In its spectacular demise, the CR repre-

sented a culmination of the dynamic that first appeared in the Hundred Flowers period, and the fruit of Mao's contradictory Stalinist critique of Stalinism.

ership of the Chinese revolution, yet for most of its formative years had almost no base among Chinese workers. From the beginning, the party placed itself outside and above the oppressed and exploited: first, by acting as an arbiter between the proletariat and peasantry and their class enemies, then by joining with these enemies as a co-manager of production, and finally by assuming the mantle of the new ruling class in a state capitalist economy. Though it aimed to overcome the USSR's shortcomings through mass movements of criticism and self-criticism, the party methodically coopted autonomous self-activity, and repressed any challenges to the organization of Chinese society. Mao aimed to prevent capitalist restoration, but ultimately strengthened the forces of capitalist exploitation, and prevented the emergence from within Chinese society of any force capable of challenging it.

Mao's theory of capitalist degeneration in the USSR was built from a theoretical patchwork, which aimed to prop up Stalin's fundamental assumptions while grappling with Soviet failures and mass resistance to the Soviet regime. During the CulturalRevolution this theory failed to provide the proletariat with a clear assessment of its position, goals and strategies—of its friends and enemies. Instead it led to confusion, weakness, demoralization and defeat. However sincere Mao may have been as an individual, he failed at crucial moments to carry out the tasks of those who call themselves revolutionaries. He did not defend movements that criticized the party from a revolutionary perspective. He did not split with his party when it turned against the proletariat, whether in 1927, the 1940s, 1957, or 1967. He did not offer to the masses in motion a clear analysis of the forces with which they were contending, of the transformative tasks that lay before them, and of how these tasks could be accomplished. He did not fortify and push forward class struggle from within the ranks of the exploited and oppressed.

Amid the Sino-Soviet split of the early 1960s, Mao came to view social conflicts under socialism as a battle between the "communist road" and capitalist restoration. While Mao still could not accept that state socialist regimes constituted class societies, he did believe class struggles continued under socialism in some form. In Mao's view, socialist society had to contend for an extended period with members of the old ruling classes that had been overthrown, and leftover ideas from the old society, both of which would lead to the degeneration of socialism if left unchecked. This had been the fate of the USSR, Mao reasoned, and it was the ultimate destiny of his opposition within the CCP. Thus Mao launched the Cultural Revolution in the late 1960s, to defend China against what he considered an impending bourgeois restoration, and to return himself and his allies to full control of the state.

The ensuing rupture unleashed a class struggle Mao was ill-prepared to confront. Over the course of grueling factional conflicts and cooptation, the Chinese proletariat grew ever more aware of its capacities and tasks, and came to challenge the party itself for control of society. Mao responded by crushing the autonomous proletarian movement he had unloosed, just as he had in 1957 during the Hundred Flowers campaign. The young militants of the Cultural Revolution, visionary though they were, were no match for the state. The "ultra left" groups lacked a shared, coherent understanding of their class position, goals and strategies, as well as a set of viable independent organizations, and were thus easily intimidated and dispersed. With their defeat, the insurrectionary period of the Cultural Revolution was brought to a close. Mao's wing of the party continued the Cultural Revolution through the mid-1970s, but their efforts faced growing popular abstention. With Mao's death, the right wing of the CCP was free to take control of the country, and institute a range of openly capitalist reforms.

Mao's politics thus proved as incoherent in practice as in theory. The CCP purported to represent the proletarian lead-

18. Revolution Inaugurated: 1965-1966

The Cultural Revolution began in late 1965, in response to the publication of Ra Hui Dismissed from Office, a play which many believed was a veiled critique of Mao's dismissal of Peng Dehuai during the Great Leap Forward. A party committee was commissioned critique the play in early 1966, but when its efforts proved unsatisfactory to Mao, the group was replaced with a "Cultural Revolution group" (CRG) positioned under the party Politburo. The CRG included top leaders from Mao's wing of the party, such as Zhang Chunqiao, Chen Boda, Mao's wife Jiang Qing, and others. In May 1966, the group was tasked with leading a "cultural revolution" to "criticize and repudiate those representatives of the bourgeoisie who have sneaked into the party, the government, the army, and all spheres of culture." This new movement was seen as an effort to defeat capitalist restoration:

> Those representatives of the bourgeoisie…are a bunch of counter-revolutionary revisionists. Once conditions are ripe, they will seize political power and turn the dictatorship of the proletariat into a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Some of them we have already seen through, others we have not. Some are still trusted by us and are being trained as our successors, persons like Khrushchev, for example, who are still nestling beside us.

Students in Beijing were the first to respond to Mao's call. "Red Guard" groups formed in June 1966 at Tsinghua Middle School and Beijing University, conducting big poster campaigns to critique educational policies. Unlike in 1957, however, the majority of students were now devoted to the Maoist wing of the party. This was primarily due to the education policies of the preceding decade. During Mao's reforms in the early 1960s, children from "black" political backgrounds (with parents from the former ruling classes) had been restricted from accessing higher education in large numbers, while those from "red" political backgrounds (children of cadres, and to a lesser extent of the proletariat and peasantry) were favored. Tension gradually built between the two student factions, as "red" students grew to become the majority of the student population, but were still outperformed and leapfrogged by the children from formerly elite classes.

Mao's call for a "cultural revolution" unleashed the conflict within the educational system. The first mobilizations tended to pit the children of cadres against those of the educated former elite. "Red" background students demanded more exclusion of "black" students from educational institutions, and more favorable policies toward workers and peasants—the classes in whose name their parents claimed to govern. School administrators were attacked for insufficiently favoring "red" students, and thereby supporting the reproduction of class privilege. As the movement grew, classes were suspended in many schools across Beijing, and local education officials were subjected to harsh public criticism.

Even this was too much for CCP pragmatists. In June 1966, Liu Shao-qi sent party "work teams" onto the campuses in Beijing, to more tightly control public criticisms emanating from students. Struggle sessions were to be limited to pre-planned gatherings, and cadres would ratify targets chosen by the students Having learned from the experience of the Socialist Education Movement, Mao sided strongly with the rebellious stu-

assumptions. Mao drew heavily from Soviet philosophical orthodoxy, adopting a view of dialectics that under-emphasizes the active role of thought in practice, and embraces a form of reductive materialism that equates revolutionary politics with natural science. His additions to his system of dialectics, while not particularly dialectical, provided useful tools for developing political strategies over the coming years.

As Mao carried out this strategy in the 1950s, he faced new practical and theoretical challenges, prompting him to develop ever more contradictory ideas. On the one hand, Mao grew increasingly critical of the Soviet Union: Khrushchev's transparent imperialist hubris, and his accommodation of the West, flew in the face of the most basic tenets of revolutionary Marxism. Disturbing revelations over the abuses of Stalin, and backlash in the form of Polish dissidence and the Hungarian Revolution, further drew into question the nature of the Soviet state, economy and society. Mao thus embraced the strategy of mass mobilizations and public criticisms developed in Yan'an, as a way to liberalize Chinese society, avoid Soviet "commandism", and place "politics in command" of Chinese society and production.

Yet on the other hand, Mao remained committed to the very Stalinist assumptions that generated the ills he sought to avoid. He still believed socialism was attainable within the bounds of a single nation state; that an economic system based onnationalization, waged work and accumulation was the appropriate method to achieve this goal; and that the stability of the Chinese state and the rule of the communist party were sacrosanct. Mao therefore supported Soviet repression in Hungary, enacted the Anti-Rightist crackdown at the zenith of the Hundred Flowers campaign, and doggedly pursued the Great Leap Forward even as the project collapsed, at great cost to human life. The failures of these initiatives sent Mao into a period of political isolation, during which he further developed his theories and critiques.

26. Where Did Maoism Come From?

A distinctly "Maoist" politics first emerged in the 1930s, as a theoretical and practical critique of the Soviet Union. In this period Mao and his allies established a method of rural "people's war," and developed their own revolutionary strategy for semi-colonial context such as China.

Mao's philosophy and strategy rested upon Stalinist assumptions: "Socialism in one country" was not a tragic necessity imposed by the failure of the world revolution, but was assumed as a goal to be prized and pursued. Nationalization and state capitalism were considered unproblematic methods with which to develop peripheral countries, after first winning leadership in the nationalist struggle through the use of a united front, carrying out a "New Democratic" revolution in tandem with the national bourgeoisie, and gradually replacing the latter at the head of the economy. Because the party was viewed as the container of the historical experience and ultimate interests of the proletariat, its right and ability to constrain the demands of women, arbitrate between the proletariat and its class enemies, muzzle autonomous class movement, and direct an exploitative economic structure, was assumed without question. Work methods such as the mass line, while departing from the usual practice of Stalinist parties, did not challenge these fundamental assumptions.

Mao synthesized his understanding of the philosophy of dialectical materialism in the 1930s, and added his own contributions. Here too, Mao retained a fundamentally Stalinist set of

dents. In August 1966, Mao published a call to "Bombard the Headquarters" in the People's Daily, officially sanctioning the Red Guard movement and castigating the "white wind" that had attempted to contain it. In a letter to Red Guards at a Beijing middle school, he affirmed that it was "right to rebel against reactionaries." Mao then oversaw a mass parade of Red Guard groups in Tiananmen Square, and called on police to avoid hampering Red Guard activities in any way.

The same month, a set of Sixteen Articles on the CR were released by the CCP Central Committee. The Articles specified the method through which the movement would be carried out, and effectively opened the floodgates to mass participation across the country. In itself, the Articles were not particularly radical. As in previous mobilizations, cadres were to stimulate mass activity and manage contradictions among the people. The target of the CR was to be a "handful" of "anti-Party, anti-socialist rightists" within the bureaucracy, rather than the party-state itself. The Articles insisted "the great majority" of party cadres were "good" or "comparatively good," and thus the movement would ultimately unify "more than 95 per cent of the cadres" behind a revolutionary political line. Furthermore, the campaign was in no way to interfere with the proletariat's ability to work: "Any idea of counterposing the Great Cultural Revolution to the development of production," the document insisted, "is incorrect."

The Sixteen Articles conceived of the CR mainly as an effort to wipe ideological cobwebs from the superstructure of Chinese society, and oppose a small number of cadres who had fallen under the sway of the reactionary ideas propagated by the overthrown ruling classes. "Although the bourgeoisie has been overthrown," the Articlesargue, "it is still trying to use the old ideas, culture, customs and habits of the exploiting classes to corrupt the masses, capture their minds and endeavour to stage a comeback." The objective of the CR was thus

> to struggle against and overthrow those persons in authority who are taking the capitalist road, to criticize and repudiate…the ideology of the bourgeoisie and all other exploiting classes and to transform education, literature and art and all other parts of the superstructure not in correspondence with the socialist economic base, so as to facilitate the consolidation and development of the socialist system.

Despite its limited scope, the Sixteen Articles went further than party pragmatists would have preferred, and provided official sanction and guidance to the CR as a mass movement. With this intervention from above, Red Guard groups surged in size and activity. Red Guards mobilized outside Beijing universities on the streets of the city, and similar groups formed in most major Chinese cities. At the same time, Mao's wing reasserted control over the party. Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaopeng were quickly targeted as the main revisionists in the CCP: Deng was removed from office, and Liu was replaced as Party Deputy Chairman by Lin Piao. The party leadership was soon immobilized by criticism from below and the threat of persecution by Mao and his allies, and the Politburo ceased to function. The CRG became the de facto political authority in China, directing the CR from Beijing. The movement had become a national phenomenon.

etween the founding of the CCP in 1921, and the death of Mao in 1976, lay five decades of struggle and politics that shaped the 20th century. Today's revolutionaries have much to learn—positive and negative—from the struggles of the Chinese proletariat and peasantry, CCP party cadres and military units, and the actions of the CCP leadership. This piece has merely scratched the surface of such an investigation. However, it's now possible to make a few generalizations about the conditions that generated Mao's theory, strategy and politics, and the applicability of that theory, strategy and politics today.

CONCLUSION

19. Red Guards in Beijing: 1966-1967

Throughout the summer and autumn of 1966, the epicenter of the CR remained in Beijing. Mao called on Red Guards to attack the "four olds": old customs, culture, habits and ideas. In response, Red Guards posted big character posters on public streets, distributed propaganda extolling revolutionary virtues, performed street theater castigating revisionism, and criticized educational officials. Some Red Guard groups also destroyed historical artworks and cultural or religious sites. Others carried themobilization to an extreme, targeting members of the deposed bourgeoisie and petit-bourgeoisie, or those related to them. Attacks on "black" categories soon became a salient feature of the Red Guard movement.

The targets of Red Guard groups were subjected to extended criticisms before mass audiences, forced to wear placards and dunce caps announcing their crimes, held before crowds in "jet" poses, with their arms pulled behind them and their heads held low, and were sometimes beaten if they resisted. According to police statistics, from mid-August to the end of September, Red Guards searched 33,600 homes in Beijing, resulting in at least 1,772 beating deaths. Mao eventually called on the Red Guards to show restraint in their criticisms, while also maneuvering to insulate the party and the economy from disruption: in September 1966, he forbid Red Guards from raiding party offices, and reminded workers and peasants to refrain from taking action and remain on the job.

At first, the Red Guards thrived on a reified notion of class known as "bloodline" theory. This theory held that one's class position was ultimately determined by the class position of one's parent. If you were the child of a war hero or prominent cadre, you were "red" and "revolutionary". If you were the child of the former ruling classes or a cadre criticized in any previous period, you were "black". As a popular saying put it: "The father's a hero, the son's a brave lad; the father's a reactionary, the son's a bastard." The theory essentially equated membership in a revolutionary class with one's hereditary loyalty to the party. At first, prominent party leaders such as Guang Feng and Jiang Qing sanctioned the bloodline theory with reservations. Chen Boda from the CRG would not denounce the theory until October 1966.

Over time, the Red Guard movement struck out at portions of the party bureaucracy as well. But this development threatened to divide the movement: First, because some groups limited their targets to disgraced "black" categories, and refused to attack the party at all. Second, because those willing to attack the party did so for different reasons, and to different extents. Red Guards included the children of elite party cadres, workers and peasants, and declassed former intellectuals. These different class bases implied different orientations toward the party-state, and laid the basis for splits as the focus turned toward the party hierarchy. Of course, all groups in the CR claimed to adhere to the CR, and justified their actions using boiled-down slogans from Mao's "little red book." But behind this veneer, different Red Guard groups, and members in the same groups, pursued divergent interests and goals. Some simply aimed to persecute "black" categories and secure their "red" prestige and privileges. Others worked to oust officials who were seen as prejudiced toward students from worker and peasant backgrounds. Still others formed to defend portions of the existing party apparatus.

movements from developing their own autonomous capacity to govern society and overthrow the state. Mao's in 1968 was just as vacillating in 1957. Once again, his actions culminated in a handover of power to the right.

The left wing groups of the CR, on the other hand, were hampered by their close relationship to state power. CR groups were launched to prominence with material support from above, and lacked the ability to maintain momentum and organization in antagonism with the state. CR groups took the majority of their theoretical categories and frames of reference from Mao and the party leadership, and only haltingly developed their own independent analysis of the situation. Lacking theoretical clarity as to who their friends and enemies were, most groups had only a vague idea of the tasks ahead, and were ill-prepared for the state to turn against them. Many groups thus fragmented and dissolved in the face of repression, in an opportunistic scramble for support from the CRG. Despite the visionary achievements of the young militants of the "ultra left," the movement they championed was crushed.

The end of the CR was the breaking point of Maoist politics. Carried to their extreme, Mao's simultaneous commitments to Stalinist assumptions and mass mobilization against capitalist restoration led to a dead end. The price of this failure was thousands injured and killed, thousands more confused and demoralized, and capitalist exploitation for decades to come.

from Pakistan, in order to avoid the formation of a Soviet-oriented state to its west. In 1973, the Chinese government rushed to recognize the new Pinochet regime, after the Soviet- and Cuban-oriented Allende government was overthrown in a coup. In 1975 it supported UNITA, an Angolan political party also backed by the U.S. and the apartheid regime in South Africa, in order to prevent Soviet-oriented MPLA guerillas from gaining power in the Angolan civil war. Even as the Chinese state drifted toward its own brand of "social imperialism," Mao never launched a campaign to criticize the party's foreign policy.

Domestically, mass enthusiasm for CR mobilizations waned. Mass dissatisfaction culminated in the "April Fifth Movement" of 1976, when crowds mourning the death of Zhou Enlai in cities across the country transformed their marches into demonstrations against the CRG. It is a measure of the failure of the CR "ultra left" that the 1976 protests were not channeled in a revolutionary direction. Instead, when Mao died in September 1976, his successor Hua Guofeng easily arrested the central leadership of the CRG (Mao's wife Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, and Wang Hongwen, referred to as the "Gang of Four") as the Chinese working class sat on the sidelines. Two years later, a newly-rehabilitated Deng Xiaopeng rose to power, and instituted a sweeping series of capitalist reforms. The Maoist era was over.

The CR demonstrated the internal incoherence of the politics Mao had developed from the Yan'an period through the Sino-Soviet split. Unclear as to the source of class conflicts in state capitalist society, Mao posed the movement in terms of "rebels" against a "handful" of capitalist roaders and their allies. These terms ultimately proved incoherent, and led to waves of factionalization as each "side" in the CR proved internally contradictory, and the class content of the movements emerged. Though he was committed in theory to revolutionizing Chinese society through mass mobilization, Mao nonetheless prevented

As the movement grew in Beijing and across the country, an initial configuration of forces emerged. In many cities, Red Guards polarized between "radical" and "conservative" blocs, the former willing to critique the local party apparatus in some way, and the latter defending it. Mao and the CRG generally backed the former bloc, which had the potential to unseat individual "capitalist roaders" in the party. Yet at the same time, tensions remained within this "radical" camp. Many students from worker and peasant backgrounds, and in some cases declassed intellectuals, were resentful of cadre privileges in general, and thus inclined to wage broad attacks on the party bureaucracy, and not merely a "handful" of officials. Amid the tumult, young intellectuals and workers, many of whom had grown up under CCP rule, began to question the nature of Chinese society and how to revolutionize it. Some developed new ideas distinct from those of Mao and the CRG.

Yu Luoke, a 24-year old factory apprentice, helped initiate this trend by publishing On Class Origins in January 1967. The piece offered a thoughtful critique of bloodline theory, and it circulated widely on a national level. Yu highlighted the logical fallacies of the bloodline conception: one's class position was determined by a variety of factors beyond one's family background, and clearly couldn't be reduced to the status of one's father. He also cast the bloodline system as a caste order, questioning whether there was a difference "between those with bad family backgrounds" in China, and groups like " blacks in America, untouchables in India, and Burakumin in Japan." Yu even went on to propose that the children of cadres were becoming "a new aristocratic stratum" in Chinese society, and that bloodline theories of class legitimized their ascent.

While Yu failed to define the party as a ruling class based on its relationship to the means of production, his intervention nevertheless marked an important shift in the movement. Red Guards could no longer claim "red" status simply because they were the children of party members in good standing. In fact,

this relationship itself could be seen as a form of caste privilege. Yu's position threatened to broaden the scope of the CR, from a mobilization targeting a "handful" of bad officials, to one questioning the place of the party in Chinese society itself. Yu was eventually denounced by the CRG for holding this position, arrested in January 1968, and executed in March 1970. But by then, the shift he inaugurated in theory was already being expressed in practice. For example, Jinggangshan, a Red Guard group formed at Tsinghua University in late 1966, studied and criticized Yu's analysis, but soon began critiquing party officials in addition to "black" groups. In December 1966, Jinggangshan would seize control of Tsinghua campus, criticizing the "hierarchical system, cadre privileges, the slave mentality, the overlord style of work, and the bloated bureaucracy."

Throughout 1966 and much of 1967, most CR groups remained mired in proxy wars between one party-allied faction or another, either defending the local party apparatus, or attacking it in tandem with Mao and the CRG. The CR movement in Nanjing, for example, never broke out of clientelist factional disputes, or formed independent groupings opposed to the party as a whole. But in the industrial stronghold of Shanghai, the story was different. There the working class emerged as a powerful independent force, with the potential to overturn the party-state itself.

a party committee subject to elections. The party committee had been abolished in 1966, Bettelheim observed, but was reinstated in 1969 after the ultra-left had been crushed. Below the party committee lay a revolutionary committee built along the three-in-one model, which "implement[ed] the revolutionary line as defined by the party committee." The two leadership groups were closely entwined, with "the leading members of the party committee" also serving as "the leading members of the revolutionary committee."

Aside these bodies stood an assortment of "worker management teams," the only groups in the factory composed entirely of workers and elected by the workers. The teams had been formed in February 1969 as a way for workers to critique "unreasonable rules," and were intended to "act as a control" on the other bodies. However, Bettelheim was informed, "the viability of the workers' management teams" was "still under discussion" at the time of his visit. In contrast to Bettelheim's warm assessment of production relations in China, his own evidence points in a negative direction. By 1971, the party had re-established control over production. Party committees had been reinstated in factories across China, superseding the three-in-one committees that had themselves coopted worker insurgency just a few years before. All worker management teams were placed under the control of the ACFTU in 1973.

In the international arena, the CCP began to act more and more like a self-interested capitalist state. After Mao established regular diplomatic relations with the U.S. to ward off Soviet military threats, he came to view Soviet "social imperialism" as the main threat to world socialism, and embraced a "Three Worlds" theory that considered the unaligned Third World the main revolutionary force on the planet. With this orientation the CCP pursued a disastrous foreign policy. In 1971, the Chinese government lent military support to the Sri Lankan state against a Trotskyist uprising, killing thousands. The same year, it opposed the independence of Bangladesh

25. Twilight of Possibility

A range of bureaucratic intrigues and small-scale conflicts took place in China after the 1967-68 Thermidor, which cannot be explored here in depth. In April 1969, the party rebuilt itself at its Ninth Congress and moved to establish order in China. The army gradually gained a greater role in national affairs, partly under pressure of border skirmishes with the USSR that threatened to plunge the region into war. While Mao responded by inviting Nixon to China and opening relations with the West to ward off Soviet hostility, others in his party faction preferred to a military orientation. This ultimately led to a failed coup attempt by Mao's close ally Lin Piao, head of the military, in 1971. Lin died in a plane crash fleeing the aftermath of the coup, and Mao was left with no clear successor. In the meantime, Mao's health began to deteriorate: already weakened by Lou Gehrig's disease, he suffered a stroke in 1972 and was increasingly removed from the public eye.

Party-led campaigns were conducted in the 1970s (for example, against Confucianism) but none were allowed to threaten the party apparatus as had the upsurge of 1967. At the same time, the gains won by the proletariat during the CR were gradually institutionalized and de-fanged. In 1973, the WGH in Shanghai was incorporated into the preexisting ACFTU, and party membership surged dramatically in the following years as the CCP inducted a generation of worker leaders into its ranks. Production too was reorganized. In 1971, French academic Charles Bettelheim toured several Chinese factories, observing the transformations wrought by the CR. At the time of his visit, the General Knitwear Factory in Beijing was run by

20. Dual Power in Shanghai: January 1967

In late 1966, the CR leapt beyond its initial student base and found a new center in Shanghai. Already that autumn, student Red Guard groups had formed in Shanghai, growing to nearly 150,000 members in high schools and universities. Now in November 1966, workers from seventeen Shanghai factories moved to form their own Workers General Headquarters (WGH). The trajectory of the worker's movement in Shanghai encapsulates of the pattern of CR as a whole: the initial polarization into "conservative" and "radical" wings generated a series of clashes and splits splits, out of which crystallized worker groups increasingly conscious of their own interests, strategies and goals independent of those of the party.

The WGH won recognition in Shanghai after 1,000 workers commandeered a series of trains bound for Beijing. Zhang Chunqiao, a member of the CRG, was forced to sanction the group as an official CR organization, and provide it with material support. The WGH then established a series of divisions across the city, and worker "brigades"flocked to the umbrella organization. In factories, public utilities, and transport hubs, workers launched big poster campaigns and public criticisms of party officials under the auspices of the WGH. By the following year the organization boasted over 700,000 members, and their numbers continued to grow. Yet, as soon as workers began to criticize party officials, a rival group of conservative workers formed the "Scarlet Guards", with the aim of defending

the existing party apparatus. Shanghai's Scarlet Guards gained 400,000 members shortly after their founding.

A confrontation between the two worker blocs soon exploded, in the "Kangping road" incident of December 1966. 30,000 Scarlet Guards surrounded the mayor's compound on Kangping road, demanding recognition as an official CR group, only to be met by 100,000 workers from the WGH. Street battles ensued, spreading to other parts of the city and continuing over a full day. The clashes injured hundreds and led to over 90 hospitalizations, and delivered a decisive defeat to the conservatives. The Scarlet Guards' leaders were detained and handed over to state security, and some were subjected to mass criticisms. Defeated on the streets and denied "official" CR status by the CRG, the Scarlet Guards were forced to disband.

The conflict between the WGH and the Scarlet Guards, and others like it around the country, was essentially a proxy battle between the party factions with which the two groups were aligned. While both courted sanction from Mao, the WGH was embraced by the CRG, and the Scarlet Guards were aligned with the local Shanghai party committee. Many CR factional conflicts were cast in this mold at first. However, with the conservative wing decisively defeated in Shanghai, this initial struggle quickly gave rise to new oppositions within the triumphant "radical" camp itself. The process began when some workers began to mobilize for their own interests, in growing antagonism with the party-state as a whole. In Shanghai this shift took the form of the "wind of economism."

Used as a pejorative label by Maoist cadres, the "wind of economism" referred to the tendency for Shanghai workers to form issue-oriented CR groups in the winter of 1966-1967. These groups shifted from critiquing individual party officials, to making demands on the state for legal recognitions, wages and benefits. Of the 354 Shanghai Red Guard groups later labeled "economistic," most consisted of workers from highly exploited sectors of Chinese society: low-wage workers; rural

which a generation of militants, steeled in the CR and sincere in their aspiration for a free society, were sacrificed.

while also accumulating capitalist value, is exactly what capitalism does. This "dual nature" of the production process, and of commodities themselves, is not an aspect of socialism, but rather reflects the fundamentally exploitative relations of production predominant in society. Like a social democratic prime minister who seeks to balance "productivity" with human needs, or a "progressive" CEO balancing ethics with profits, the state capitalist managers envisioned by the Textbook must also grapple with this duality. This tension hardly makes them socialist. Rather, it makes them quintessentially capitalist.

Simply factoring human needs into the prerogative to accumulate does not abolish capitalism. Even instituting central planning, dramatically constricting the flow of commodity circulation, or limiting the ability of money to act as the wellspring of accumulation, will not accomplish a transformation in the relations of production and reproduction of society. So long as the relations of production in a given society remain based on alienation and exploitation, carrying out production to meet the "ever-increasing needs of the state" and population will also require the "ever-expanded production of abstract labor in mass and in rate," as observed by C.L.R. James, Raya Dunayevskaya and Grace Lee Boggs in 1950. These processes can take a variety of forms under systems of state ownership, as the Aufheben group has excellently analyzed. For example, accumulation in the USSR centered the industrial circuit of capital, leading to the production of masses of ultimately defective use-values as bearers of accumulation. Regardless of the particular forms such distortions take on, however, the society in which they occur remains fundamentally capitalist in nature.

The Shanghai Textbook, quite simply, describes state capitalist exploitation. This is the economic system upon which the Chinese state was based, and which Mao and other party intellectuals strove to justify in Marxist terms. It is also the altar on

workers who had been sent to the countryside after the GLF, who now demanded hukou status in Shanghai; and many temporary and contract workers from the countryside (a cheap labor pool in China's cities then as now) who demanded status, protections and wages. In December 1966, Shanghai's embattled mayor granted a series of wage reforms and job reclassifications to these groups. Within a few months, workers had extorted over 1 million yuanfrom the state in the form of increased wages, insurance and welfare benefits, and subsidies for travel and food. They also seized housing: over five days from December 1966 to January 1967, "all the housing in the city that had been awaiting allocation was forcibly occupied."

The movement in Shanghai soon moved from winning wages and benefits to taking over the city as a whole. As in many such cases throughout history, the social turmoil generated by the movement compelled workers to begin managing daily life themselves. Transport, water and electricity had been hampered for weeks as a result of "economistic" strikes. Production had been disrupted in many factories. The city government was crippled, and disorganization began to appear in rail yards and public transportation. The WGH thus began coordinating citywide production and transportation of goods, as well as public transit, through its own mass formations. In many factories, managers and party committees were supplanted by committees elected by workers. It was a moment of dual power: the existing state apparatus had been partially replaced by a new form of proletarian organization.

The transformation was at first sanctioned by the CRG, at a mass rally in January 1967. Thousands gathered in central Shanghai to criticize and officially remove the existing Shanghai Party Committee, and replace it with a "Shanghai People's Commune" made up of worker groups. The power shift became known across China as the "January revolution." It sparked a wave of rebellions throughout 1967: major strikes exploded Chekiang, Sichuan, Kiangsi, Kweichow and

Heilongjiang provinces, among others. Innumerable revolts unfolded in local areas and individual factories, leading to the establishment of worker committees. Full power seizures eventually took place in 29 provinces and municipalities. But in Shanghai, the commune wasn't permitted to last.

For the Textbook's authors, "socialism" refers to a system in which state leaders coordinate the production of capitalist value, and then apportion out this value to the workers who produced it, to the general population of society, and to the further expansion of production and the accumulation of such value. In essence, they describe the same capitalist system with state intervention, more or less social democratic, which exists in the rest of the world. Yet the Textbook insists this state of affairs is qualitatively different from capitalism.

The same arguments reappear in Chapter 8 of the Textbook, "Frugality Is an Important Principle in the Socialist Economy." After detailing how party managers should conduct accounting in state run enterprises, the authors struggle to distinguish capitalist accounting categories from socialist ones. "Capital funds, production costs, profits, and other value categories in the system of socialist economic accounting" may sound like the same categories used by capitalist firms, but "they reflect specific relations of production and are different from…value categories in the system of capitalist economic accounting." What does this difference consist of? The Textbook offers a distinction: "Under capitalism, capital is value that generates surplus value, and the value category reflects the exploitative relations of capital over hired labor." By contrast, under socialism

> Capital funds…are that part of the accumulated state wealth used for production and operation. The use of these funds by the enterprise in production and operational activities follows the requirements of the fundamental socialist economic law of the satisfaction of the ever-increasing needs of the state and the people and serves expanded reproduction.

Contrary to the unsupported assertions of the Textbook's authors, the use of production to satisfy public and state needs,

> law of of commodity production, it is, in the final analysis, a remnant of private economy.

Interestingly, the quote above never specifies the second "two-fold effect" of the law of value. What are the effects of this "remnant of private economy"? The Textbook doesn't say. Instead, it merely advises caution when utilizing the law of value: cadres must "make use of its positive effects on socialist production, while at the same time we restrict its negative, destructive effects."

Vague cautionary statements aside, the Textbook assures its readers that commodity production under state socialism "is fundamentally different from capitalist private production" because it is "conducted to directly meet social needs" and carried out "in a planned manner," and because commodity circulation is greatly reduced in scope. Under this system of production

> the labor of the laborer, as concrete labor, transfers and preserves the value of the means of production used up in the production process. As abstract labor, it creates new value. Should this new value created by the producer belong entirely to the producer himself? No. To realize socialist expanded reproduction and to satisfy the diverse common needs of the laborers, society must control various social funds. …Therefore, in socialist society, the new value created by the producer must be divided into two parts. One part is at the disposal of the producer himself. It constitutes the personal consumption fund of the producer and is used to satisfy the personal living requirements of the producer. Another party constitutes various social funds: this social net income is at the disposal of society and is used to further develop socialist production and to satisfy the various common needs of the masses of laboring people.

21. The First Thermidor: February 1967

In urgent meetings with the CRG, Mao opposed the formation of the Shanghai commune. At a meeting with Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan in mid-February, Mao opposed this seizure on practical grounds. "If he whole of China sets up people's communes," Mao asked,

> should the People's Republic of China change its name to "People's Commune of China"? Would others recognize us? Maybe the Soviet Union would not recognize us whereas Britain and France would. And what would we do about our ambassadors in various countries?

Secondly, Mao asserted that communes were "weak when it comes to suppressing counter-revolution. People have come and complained to me that when the Bureau of Public Security arrest people, they go in the front door and out the back." Thus, in the interest of maintaining China's stability within the interstate system, and guaranteeing the state's effective monopoly on force domestically, Mao called for the Shanghai commune to be reconfigured. Zhang Chunqiao carried this message back to Shanghai, and imposed it with the collaboration of the WGH leadership.

In late February 1967, the WGH and Zhang held another mass rally, this time announcing the dissolution of the Shanghai People's Commune, and the formation of a "Shanghai Revolutionary Committee". The new committee was built along

a "three-in-one" model, which combined representatives from worker organizations, the army, and party cadres. This form of organization, an editorial in Red Flag declared, would be the "provisional organ of power" of the CR. By contrast, "the concept of excluding and overthrowing all cadres is absolutely wrong." Such a view was a "poisonous influence" that had been "advocated by those several people who put forth the bourgeois reactionary line," and which was unwittingly parroted by well-intentioned sectors of the movement.

After February 1967, the three-in-one model became the primary form through which Mao institutionalized movements across China. The committees allowed the party to admit insurgent forces into the governing apparatus, while outweighing them with cadres and military officials loyal to the party center. In many cases, officials who had just been criticized and ousted months before were rehabilitated to serve on them. Over the following months three-in-one committees were established in provinces, cities, and individual factories and schools. In some cases they were a preemptive response to blunt mobilization from below. In other cases, party officials themselves initiated power seizures from above: in Nanjing, local rebel groups declined to seize power at an official's request, insisting that they weren't prepared to run the province. Assured that "power seizure" would only involve them supervising incumbent officials, the rebels replied, "if that's what power seizure means, we can do it."

In Shanghai, the various three-in-one committees governing the city contained large numbers of workers. But as one worker complained, workers were "put in charge of secondary matters and administrative details…few handled political work." The majority of leadership posts were often reserved for party cadres, or workers who were party members. In some cases, emergent worker leaders were quickly recruited into the party. At the Shanghai Bureau of Light Industry, worker representation was far less than a third: only 9.6.% of leadership posts

tortion has led to absurd results in the Maoist tradition. For example, the 1995 Long Live Marxism-Leninism-Maoism! statement of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement insisted that "the correctness of the ideological and political line determines whether the proletariat actually owns the means of production." The notion that state managers "rely on the masses" in composing these political lines is, of course, mere rhetoric. In every historical example of state socialism, ruling parties have relied not on the masses, but on their power over the reproduction of society guaranteed through their control of production, and on their use of specialized armed groups to maintain this arrangement.

With its substitutionist assumptions firmly in place, however, the Textbook can go on to assume the fundamentally socialist character of Chinese society, no matter what its relations of production. Nowhere is this clearer than in Chapter 5, entitled "Develop Socialist Production with Greater, Faster, Better, and More Economical Results". This chapter instructs party cadres in how to carry out production and accumulation in socialist society. Under socialism, the Textbook admits, "the commodity still has use value and value, that is, a dual nature" and "the economic law of commodity production is still the law of value." Just as was the case in capitalist society, socialist production too "is a unity of this direct social labor process and the value-creation process." How, then, is state socialist production any different from capitalist production? The difference, the Textbook argues, is that under state socialist regimes the law of value can be carefully applied and controlled:

> Under conditions of socialist public ownership, the law of value has a two-fold effect on socialist production: on the one hand, if utilized correctly, it can have the effect of actively promoting the development of production; on the other hand, as the

book, conflicts under socialism result from the incongruity between a fundamentally socialist economic base and an outdated superstructure—not from irreconcilable contradictions in the economic base of society itself. Such conflicts therefore need not be resolved through a revolutionary overthrow of class society. Instead, contradictions under socialism are "not antagonistic and can be resolved one after another by the socialist system itself."

The Textbook thus sketches in theoretical shorthand the actual course of the Chinese revolution, as theorized by Mao. The Textbook narrative rests on the same Stalinist assumptions shared by Mao, including party substitutionism. For the Textbook's authors, the party in state power is synonymous with the proletariat's mastery over society. "Ultimately it should be the laborers themselves" who organize the production process, the Textbook admits. But "naturally, this does not mean that all the laborers directly organize and manage production. The broad masses of laborers appoint representatives through the state and the collective, or they elect representatives to organize production," and these appointed and elected managers then in turn "rely on the masses." Rather than specify the material relations that guarantee this "reliance," the Textbook reduces the question to one of political line: "when the leadership of the socialist economy is in the hands of genuine Marxists, they can represent the interests of the workers…in owning and dominating the means of production." "The crux of judging who controls the leadership of the socialist economy" thus "lies in what line is being implemented by the departments of the enterprise in charge of production operation or economic management."

With this formulation, Maoist theory comes full-circle, from a Marxist conception in which the social relations of production and reproduction determine the character of a society, to a bourgeois conception in which the good ideas, intentions, and subjective aspirations of those in power do so. This dis-

were filled by rebel workers, and in some committees the figure was as low as 4.1%.

With this structure in place, Mao's wing of the party moved against the "wind of economism". Mao believed "economistic" groups were not the product of workers fighting for their self-interest, but rather the creation of capitalist roaders in the party, who hoped to "buy off" the movement with material gains. The CRG thus initiated a crackdown on "economistic" groups, which forced many of the single-issue rebel groups in Shanghai to disband to avoid imprisonment. The WGH leadership followed suit: a WGH flyer insisted "we are rebelling against a small handful of authorities taking the capitalist road, rebelling against the reactionary bourgeois line, and not primarily over 'money.'" City agencies demanded workers return the money disbursed to them, and recouped 488,000 yuan back into the hands of the state.

The February crackdown led to a new round of divisions in the rebel ranks. Now the rebel faction split between those already included in the new three-in-one committees, and those excluded from it. Within the latter camp, tensions remained between those who hoped to win inclusion in the new political order, and others who now sought to overthrow it. Similar splits occurred across the country: in Tsinghua University in Beijing, the Jinggangshan group split over whether to accept rehabilitated cadres in the new three-in-one committees. The highly radical faction, most of whose leaders and membership was from peasant and worker backgrounds, opposed the rehabilitated cadres and called for "mass supervision" of the committees instead. In Shanghai, a similar tendency cohered around a group known as Lian Si.

Lian Si was a group of 3,000 young factory workers, who had been persecuted in the mid-1960s as a "counterrevolutionary clique" for writing counterrevolutionary slogans such as "Let's hold dance parties at once!" and "Long live women!" on factory walls. With blighted records, the Lian Si workers found

themselves excluded from the three-in-one system. The group responded by arguing that "Shanghai's leadership authority is not in the hands of the proletariat," and calling for "an alliance of all revolutionary rebels in the city who were suppressed after February 5, 1967." The group established liaison posts across the city, and soon attracted all the forces that had been left out of the new political order, or whose "economistic" demands had been sidelined by it. The group called for the overthrow of the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee itself.

WGH-affiliated groups soon challenged Lian Si-affiliated groups in the streets. April 1967 saw 156 armed battles in Shanghai, and 140 clashes in the first week of May alone, in tandem with an uptick of violent clashes across the country. In August 1967, the WGH sent thousands of combatants to attack the Lian Si headquarters at the Shanghai Deisel Engine Factory, sparking a major confrontation in which workers battled with iron bars, bricks and molotov cocktails. By the end of the conflict, 983 were injured and 1,000 Lian Si members were taken prisoner. While a year prior it was the conservative Scarlet Guards that had been defeated in battle, now it was the movement's radical wing. Lian Si effectively ceased to exist, and there were no further challenges to the three-in-one power structure in Shanghai.

The rise and fall of dual power in Shanghai demonstrates the arduous learning process endured by the Chinese proletariat during the CR. Rebel groups came to understand their interests, distinct from those of Mao and the CRG, only gradually. At first the movement split along "rebel" and "conservative" lines, aligned with Mao's wing of the party and established local party officials, respectively. After the "rebel" factions were embraced and institutionalized in 1967, rebel groups then split according to who was included in, and excluded from, the new order. Excluded groups in turn disagreed over whether they should try to gain entry into the system, or overthrow it. At each successive stage, the most radical wings of the move-

the bourgeois superstructure of a given society, establishes a socialist economic base, and inaugurates the period of socialism or "lower" communism as delineated in Marx's 1875 Critique of the Gotha Programme and later systematized by Lenin. In the Maoist interpretation, class struggle continues in this period, jeopardizing the continuation to full communism and threatening a return to capitalism. "Nonsocialist relations of production" must be "transformed step by step": First, capitalists at the head of joint state-private enterprises must be phased out, and industries must be nationalized. This "establishment of the system of socialist public ownership" constitutes a "fundamental negation of the system of private ownership" (24), at which point "all laborers become masters of enterprises." The textbook doesn't describe this mastery in qualitative terms, but rather asserts and assumes it.

The process of socialist transition doesn't stop with nationalization, however. Following nationalization, the new "socialist relations of production" must also "undergo a process of development" and improvement. Along the way, the now-socialist state encounters contradictions "between the superstructure and the economic base under socialism": bad habits and ideas left over from the old society linger in mass consciousness; members of the overthrown classes maneuver to re-enter positions of power; and bureaucratic work methods and other "imperfections" hinder state production. All of these factors prevent the socialist character of production from maturing fully. Because of them, "the consolidation, improvement, and further development of the socialist economic base are hindered and undermined."

Therefore, the Textbook argues, the party must find ways to "make the socialist superstructure better serve the socialist economic base." This can be accomplished "only by continually resolving" the contradictions listed above. Such a process does not amount to class struggle as occurred under capitalist society, however. This is because, according to the Text-

24. The Shanghai Textbook and Socialist Transition: 1975

Mao and the CRG continued to carry out mass mobilizations under the auspices of the CR after the movements of 1967 and 1968 had been suppressed. At the same time, they moved to consolidate what they saw as the gains of the period. One aspect of this effort was the publication of materials to make Mao's conception of socialist transition broadly accessible to party cadres and the Chinese populace. In 1974, the party published a textbook entitled Fundamentals of Political Economy as part of a Youth Self-Education series. Selections from Fundamentals of Political Economy have been republished in the U.S. under the title Maoist Economics and the Revolutionary Road to Socialism: The Shanghai Textbook, and are often referred to simply as the Shanghai Textbook.

The book offers a concise portrait of the zenith of Mao's politics, and today serves as a reference point for many U.S. Maoists. A close reading of the entire Fundamentals of Political Economy isn't possible here, as the book spans over 400 pages, covering topics as diverse as the nature of capitalist exploitation and imperialism, and methods of state socialist planning and accounting. However, it is possible to highlight one of the salient features of the book in its Textbook form: it builds upon Stalinist assumptions to embrace capitalist value categories and techniques, and thus marks the consolidation of Mao's thought as a state capitalist ruling ideology.

The Textbook opens by offering a schematic model of a revolutionary process. First, a revolutionary upsurge demolishes

ment grew more antagonistic with the party-state, but hesitated to break decisively with the CRG and Mao. Thus radical CR groups repeatedly failed to build organizations capable of acting independently of the party, or develop independent analyses of Chinese society and the movement's tasks. When forced to do so by the course of events, it was often too late. These shortcomings would play out tragically with the emergence and defeat of the "ultra left" tendency in 1967-1968.

22. The "Wuhan incident" and Armed Struggle: 1967

The cycle of protest, cooptation, splits and clashes seen in Shanghai reappeared across the country in 1967. The result was a slew of factional battles in the streets of Chinese cities, out of which crystallized a distinct "ultra left" wing of the movement. The "ultra left" of the CR was a diverse milieu of local rebel groups, publications and journals, which called variously for organizational separation from the CCP, a revolutionary split in the army, and a new revolution in China. These developments were centered in Hunan province.

The Hunan movement developed in late 1966, as local groups connected on a province-wide scale in a practice referred to as the" revolutionary link-up". Xiang River Storm, a province-wide coalition of CR groups, was formed in October 1966 by Hunanese groups who had traveled to Beijing to lodge complaints. Its base included students, workers from cooperative enterprises, temporary urban workers, youth returning from the countryside to demand placement in cities, and the urban unemployed. When the January revolution spread across China in early 1967, its membership ballooned to some one million members. The Red Flag Army, a 470,000-strong group of disgruntled PLA veterans in Hunan, also formed at this time, storming the provincial military command headquarters to demand better veterans benefits. Both groups were condemned by the CRG: the Red Flag Army was deemed "reactionary" in January 1967, and Xiang River Storm was declared illegal and

the party center. In August 1968, the Hunanese "Plow Society" too was shut down, and its leaders imprisoned. Most of China was stabilized through crackdowns, arrests, and the implementation of three-in-one committees at various levels by the end of the year, though wildcat strikes continued to disrupt production into 1970. These developments marked the end of mass proletarian initiative under Mao's rule.

Shengwulian's young theoreticians fled into hiding: Yang went underground, but was soon captured in Wuhan and arrested, while his mother was captured and driven to suicide by repeated mass criticisms. Zhou Guohi, a contemporary of Yang's, was captured, beaten, and subjected to dozens of mass denunciations. By February 1968 Shengwulian was effectively destroyed, and its constituent groups disbanded. In April 1968, a Hunan provincial revolutionary committee, built on the three-in-one model, was put in place without significant resistance. Yet the "ultra left" was not entirely liquidated: the Wuhan-based "Plow Society" continued to publish documents for a time, reaffirming the class analysis put forth by Yang, calling for the formation of a new revolutionary party, and analyzing the different factions of the CR movement. The group's "inaugural declaration" stated:

> Political climbers are fighting each other to secure their seats…But there are also a large number of revolutionary whippersnappers who have been making unremitting efforts to prepare 'weapons' and 'ammunition' for battles in the future. Those who desire nothing but being part of the officialdom…will eventually be abandoned by the people. The hope of our country is placed in those who are willing to seek truth and study hard to understand the current moment.

In July 1968, Mao dispatched "Mao Zedong Thought Propaganda Teams" to take control of Tsinghua University in Beijing, one of the epicenters of the early Red Guard movement. The teams, composed of masses of workers who were mostly party members, and supervised by military officers, disbanded student groups and established a three-in-one committee to run the campus under their supervision. Now Mao played the role of Liu Shao-qi, suppressing the student movement from

driven underground in February, with over 100,000 of its members arrested.

The CRG's crackdown and cooptation was briefly halted, however, in response to what became known as the "Wuhan incident". In July 1967, conservative rebel groups backed by local military officials laid siege to rebel groups in Wuhan, who had tried to seize power in the city. Xie Fuzhi and Wang Li traveled to Wuhan from the CRG in Beijing, intending to mediate the dispute in favor of the rebel forces. But when they arrived, they were promptly arrested by the local military. The allegiances of military commanders in Wuhan now appeared unclear. Mao himself was in Wuhan at the time for an inspection tour, and had to be hastily flown to Shanghai with an escort of fighter jets. Zhou Enlai then flew to Wuhan to address the situation, but local military forces surrounded the airstrip and prevented his plane from landing. For a moment, it looked as if conservative elements in the army had reached their limit with the CR, and were inching toward an outright coup.

The Wuhan mutiny was quickly put down by Lin Piao, head of the military and Mao's close ally. Infantry divisions, navy gunboats and air force units descended on the city, and forced a speedy surrender. Yet even after the incident was resolved, Mao had to address the danger of conservative forces in the army. He thus appealed to the very left-wing base he had just repressed. Mao now publicly advocated "arming the left" and expanding the CR to target "capitalist roaders in the army" as well as the party. Mao's wife Jiang Qing openly called for the movement to start seizing arms. The rebel groups took Mao at his word. To many across the country, it seemed Mao's call for an armed campaign against the right wing amounted to an official reversal of the February counterrevolution. Over the following weeks, both left- and right-wing CR groups expropriated guns from armories. In some provinces revolutionaries seized trainloads of armaments bound for Vietnam. "The lesson of the Wuhan Incident," wrote one young rebel,

> is that a prerequisite for seizing power…is to take over the military power usurped by the handful of bourgeois representatives in the army. Otherwise, the power seizure is nothing but empty talk.

Shooting wars quickly broke out on the streets of Chinese cities, as rebel groups engaged in armed clashes with both the military, and conservative groups. In Changsha, rebel groups retained control of the major factories in the city, after engaging in fierce battles with conservative factions that had seized control of a gun manufacturing factory in neighboring Xiangtan. In Beijing, rebels went so far as to seize the Foreign Ministry, and call on Chinese diplomatic posts across the globe to spread the revolution (thus answering in practice Mao's earlier concern about a commune's place in the international state system). In August 1967 there were between twenty and thirty armed clashes every day across China. Three years later, Mao would comment on this period: "Everywhere people were fighting, dividing into two factions. There were two factions in every factory, in every school, in every province, and in every county. …There was massive upheaval throughout the country."

The breaking point came in September 1967, when Mao's wing of the party again stifled the revolutionary wave it had called into being. That month, Mao authorized the army to use armed force to defend itself while restoring order. Mao's wife Jiang Qing reversed her call for the left to seize arms, and denounced a group that had done so in Beijing—the small May 16 Group—as an "ultra-left" conspiracy bent on conducting a coup. In Hunan the military collected arms that had been seized, gathering "5,510 guns (including 280 machine guns), 28 artillery pieces, 11,853 hand grenades, 1,077,026 rounds of bullet, 621 rounds of artillery shell, and 5,573 kilograms of explosives" in one week. Party directives instructed Red Guard students across the country to cease the "revolutionary link-

Luoke's critique of the party as a privileged "caste," the "ultra-left" now viewed the party-state as a ruling class exploiting the proletariat. In the course of mass protests, armed clashes and power seizures, the mass movement had forged a new level of clarity as to the configuration of class forces in Chinese society, and produced a new generation of revolutionaries striving for independence from the CCP. Reflecting on this arduous process, Yang writes:

> This is the first time the revolutionary people have tried to overthrow their powerful enemies. How shallow their knowledge of this revolution was! Not only did they fail consciously to understand the necessity to completely smash the old state machinery and to overhaul some of the social systems, they also did not even recognize the fact that their enemy formed a class.

After the publication of Whither China?, Yang and his milieu wrote further documents on revolutionary organization, and conducted investigations into the grievances and conditions of workers and peasants in different parts of Hunan province. But the counterattack from the state capitalist ruling class came quickly.

In January 1968, CRG leaders Jiang Qing, Kang Sheng, Yao Wenyuan, Chen Boda and Zhou Enlai unanimously condemned Shengwulian as "counterrevolutionary", and called for mass criticism of Whither China?—ironically allowing the document to circulate widely. Li Yuan, a general in Changsha, denounced Shengwulian as a "big hodge-podge of social dregs" composed of "landlords, rich peasants, counterrevolutionaries, rightists, unrepentant capitalist roaders, KMT leftovers, and Trotskyist bandits." Mao himself soon began using the term "Shengwulian-style hodgepodge" as an epithet for the groups who had emerged from the factional battles of 1967 seeking autonomy from the state.

state capitalist ruling class as the enemy. In contrast to the party's claim in 1966 that only a "handful" of party cadres were reactionary, Yang insists that "90 percent of the senior cadres…already formed a privileged class." Yang uses the term "'Red' capitalist" to describe the party, and argues that since 1949, the relation between the party and the masses has "changed from relations between leaders and the led, to those between rulers and the ruled and between exploiters and the exploited." Now a "Red capitalist class" rules a social order "built upon the foundation of oppression and exploitation of the broad masses of people." "In order to realize the 'People's Commune of China,'" Yang argues, it is now "necessary to overthrow this class."

Yang refuses using the three-in- one committees as a path to proletarian power, because they "will inevitably be a type of regime for the bourgeoisie to usurp power, in which the army and local bureaucrats will play a leading role." Furthermore, Yang notes that "some of the armed forces…have even become tools for suppressing the revolution," and thus the only option for the movement is to foment a split in the army, and launch a new armed struggle. "A revolutionary war in the country is necessary," he argues, "before the revolutionary people can overcome the armed Red capitalist class." Revolutionaries must build on the "ultra left" groupings scattered across the country, and form a new "Mao Tse-tung-ism party" separate from the existing CCP.

Whither China?displays confusions about Mao's role in the CR. Yang repeatedly interprets Mao's efforts to contain proletarian movement as sensible tactical retreats, and selects the most revolutionary of Mao's vacillating positions to justify his "ultra-left" stance. Nevertheless, Yang's document represents the intellectual fruit of two years of massive class struggle on the part of the Chinese proletariat, and the clearest expression of the liberatory possibilities of the Chinese revolutionary experience. From targeting a "handful" of party officials, to Yu

up" and return to classes, and for rural youths to return to the countryside. Others called for the dissolution of "mountain strongholds": mass organizations that extended across large regions, or which spanned students, workers and soldiers, and were thus semi-autonomous from party control.

As in Shanghai, not all rebel groups accepted the crackdown. By late 1967, the young militants in Hunan had experienced a year of power seizures, armed conflicts, and betrayals from party leaders. They began to develop their own analysis of their friends and enemies.

23. "Whither China?" and the Ultra-Left: 1968

In October 1967, the excluded groups of Xiang River Storm held a conference in Changsha to establish a new, province-wide revolutionary coalition to push beyond the existing three-in-one system. The coalition included over twenty groups across the province, composed of students, youth returning from the countryside, army veterans, temporary workers—essentially, all the groups excluded from the new political order backed by the CRG. The new coalition chose the name Shengwulian (an acronym for Hunan Provisional Proletarian Revolutionary Great Alliance Committee). It numbered around 300,000 members. Most of Shengwulian's constituent groups did not aim to overthrow the state, but rather hoped to gain inclusion within it, whether limiting their demands to particular reforms, or fighting to be rehabilitated by the party. So dependent was Shengwulian on sanction from above, that the coalition cancelled its founding celebration after Zhou Enlai denounced the new group as "ultra left" immediately after its founding. Many groups abandoned Shengwulian at this point, before the alliance even got off the ground.

But other portions of the coalition began to reflect on their situation, and reach profoundly new conclusions. "Our Program," written by Zhang Yugang, a student at theSouth-Central College of Mining, in December 1967, argued that the CR should not limit itself to removing a "handful" of revisionist cadres inside the CCP. Instead it should target the "newly born corrupted bourgeois privileged stratum" and "smash the old

state apparatus that is in the service of bourgeois privilege". Similar ideas were crystallizing across the country, as newborn "ultra-left" groups circulated their perspectives in local newspapers, posters and leaflets. The "ultra-left" current included groups as far afield as "Communist Group" in Beijing, the "October Revolution Group" in Shandong, the "Oriental Society" in Shanghai, the "August 5 Commune" in Guangzhou, and the "Plough Society" in Wuhan.

The most concise "ultra left" position was synthesized in the Shengwulian statement Whither China?, also released in December 1967. Whither China?was written by Yang Xiguang, an 18-year old Hunanese student imprisoned for 40 days for his support of Xiang River Storm. Yang wrote the document as a discussion piece, offering an appraisal of the events since January 1967. The piece argues that the movement should aim to establish a "People's Commune of China" modeled roughly on the Paris Commune of 1871—a possibility Yang believed had been proven possible by the January Revolution, and in arms seizures of August 1967.

In January, government and means of production briefly passed "from the hands of the bureaucrats into the hands of the enthusiastic working class," and "for the first time, the workers had the feeling that 'it is not the state which manages us; but we who manage the state.'" Later, "in the gun-seizing movement, the masses, instead of receiving arms like favors from above, for the first time seized arms from the hands of the bureaucrats by relying on the violent force of the revolutionary people themselves." This move allowed "the emergence of an armed force" organized by the people, which became "the actual force of the proletarian dictatorship…They and the people are in accord, and fight together to overthrow the 'Red' capitalist class."

For Yang, the events of 1967 had proven the Chinese proletariat had the ability to depose the existing rulers, and run society itself on an egalitarian basis. He clearly identifies the